

8756 AN
ANTIDOTE

Against the **POISON**

Of some

LATE PAMPHLETS

Intituled,

I. *The Protestant Dissenters Hopes from the Present Government freely declar'd.*

II. *The Protestant Dissenters Case Represented and Argued.*

III. *A Plain Discovery of what the Dissenters would be at.*

IV. *Two Letters annex'd to the said Pamphlets, The one, To the Author of the Occasional Paper. The other, From a Dissenter to a Member of Parliament.*

V. *Two Letters from a Person in London to a Correspondent in Evelham in Worcestershire.*

VI. *An Essay of Comprehension Answer'd.*

To which is added,

VII. *A Reply to Two Pamphlets more, The one Of Presbyterian Loyalty; The other Of Plain Dealing.*

With some short Advice to Dissenters in the Close.

In several Letters to a Friend.

Job 8. 13. the latter part, *The Hypocrites Hope shall perish.*

O X F O R D,

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The P R E F A C E

To the Reader.

THE Contagion of bad Principles and evil Practices is of so diffusive and spreading a Nature, that it calls for the most Sovereign Antidote to prevent the Infection, and to be preserv'd from the pernicious Influence of them.

And because the Poison of this Kind is most frequently and fatally convey'd in seditious Libels and Pamphlets, it may not be altogether an unprofitable Task, to take out the Sting and Venom of them, that they may not annoy or mislead unwary Readers.

Our Blessed Saviour caution'd his Disciples against the Leaven of the Pharisees, which was of several sorts, to wit, the Leaven of pride, by which they swell'd and exalted themselves; the Leaven of hypocrisy, by which they deceiv'd and beguil'd Others with empty Shews without Substance; the Leaven of malice, by which they sour'd and embitter'd Men's Minds against each other; and the Leaven of error and false Doctrine, by which they drew many from the Truth, to believe Lies and Impostures: and there are but too many of these modern Pharisees or Separatists in our days, who poison the People with bad Principles both of Religion and Government. And if a little Leaven (as the

Apostle tells us) leaveneth the whole Lump, a great deal infus'd and insinuated by false Teachers may overrun and corrupt a whole Country.

To obviate and prevent this, is the Design of the following Letters, viz, to purge out this Old Leaven, to satisfie and sweeten Men's Minds, that they may become a new Lump, and serve God with the unleavened Bread of Sincerity and Truth.

This Antidote for that purpose is compos'd more of Lenitives, and Cordial Desires of the publick Peace and private Welfare of all Persons, than of Corrosives to move the Spleen or Passion of any, or create any Pain or Uneasiness in those for whom it is prepar'd. And if it be as kindly receiv'd as meant, they will find a greater Reason to comply with the Wholesomness of the Prescription, than to complain of any Bitterness or hard Usage in it. Farewell.

Letter the First.

SIR,

I Receiv'd the Pamphlet you were pleas'd to send me to peruse, intituled *The Protestant Dissenters Hopes from the present Government freely Declar'd.*

Wherein I was in some Hopes of finding the Dissenting Party, making some nearer Steps towards an Agreement and Conformity with the Establish'd Church; as the only way and means to the Attaining of the so much desired Union.

But in stead of that, I find them going farther off, and labouring still to Continue and Encrease the Divisions, by Rubbing up the Old Stale Objections and Cavils against Conformity, which have been frequently and fully Answered and Exploded by many Pious and Learned Writers of the Church of England.

However, This Pamphletter seems Resolv'd not to drop the Cause so; but having some more than Ordinary hopes from the present Posture of Affairs, he purposes to make what use and advantage he can of them for the gaining some farther Points to the Party.

You see, Sir, Liberty alone will not please, 'tis Dominion and Authority they aim at, and seem uneasy and unwilling to be satisfied without it, being still thirsty and gaping after it. And therefore He is so far from Healing, that he seeks to Widen our Breaches, and lays aside all thoughts of an Accommodation, except upon his own Terms: as by a short View of what he writes will plainly appear.

In the Beginning of his Letter he tells his Friend in London, how the Dissenters were generally Surpriz'd at a Proposal made by the Reverend Doctor Sherlock in his Sermon before the Honourable House of Commons, where-

in for *Quieting the Angry Spirit that is amongst us*, he thinks it necessary to *Allay the groundless Fears of some Church-men*, and to *Suppress the unreasonable Hopes and Expectations of Dissenters*, as the best Expedient to promote the Peace and Prosperity both of Church and State: which things, if well Stated and Observ'd, would go a great way to the accomplishing of those good Ends: for Hope and Fear are the two Ruling Passions of Mens Mind, that command and govern all their Actions, which move and turn upon those two Hinges, to wit, upon the Hopes of Obtaining some possible Good; and the Fears of Sustaining some probable Evil.

And where there are different Parties and Factions, there will necessarily be different Hopes and Fears about these Matters; The Fears and Jealousies of the one Side (as the Doctor wisely observes) naturally encreasing with the Hopes and Expectations of the Other, without knowing or enquiring what Ground or Foundation there is for either. So that *To Quiet the Angry Spirit that is amongst us*, 'twill be requisite to reduce those Passions to their Right Objects, to keep them within their Proper Bounds, and to see upon what Grounds they stand, that we may all Act upon sound Principles, and be content to Obey on the same Terms, on which his Majesty hath declar'd himself dispos'd to Govern.

To which end, the Reverend Doctor fitly prescribes the Allaying of all groundless Fears, and the Suppressing of all unreasonable Hopes.

Now the Dissenters Apprehending (and perhaps rightly enough) that the Church-mens Fears cannot well be Allay'd but by Suppressing the Dissenters Hopes, moves them to make all the Exceptions they can against Both, which must be therefore duly and impartially examin'd.

And First, This Author takes Occasion to Reflect upon the Fears of some Church-men, which he says, *are as groundless, unreasonable, and ill-natur'd as ever enter'd into the Mind of Man*. And so indeed they are, if they are such as he represents them.

Let us see then what these Fears are, that we may the better know how to Allay or Remove them. To clear
which

which He divides them into Real and Pretended Fears, charging some Church-men with both.

The Pretended Fears (he tells us) are of the Churches Danger under his Majesties Administration. Now these according to him are only Pretended, but no Real Fears, that is, they may seem to Dissenters to have some Fears about these matters, when they inwardly Fear no such thing, for Pretended Fears can signifie no more, nor rise any higher, then feigned or imaginary Fears. Upon which account he himself tells us, that *they would have them believe, that they are seiz'd with trembling fits, with the greatest dread and horror*, when indeed there is no such matter. The truth is, since his Majesties Royal Declaration of his Resolution to preserve and defend the Church of England as by Law establish'd, and to make the Constitution in Church and State the Rule of his Government; I believe there are few or none seiz'd or possess'd with any such Panick Fears about it; they think themselves safe in his Majesties Royal Word, and are not inclin'd to fear where no Fear is. Especially since he in his own Person and Family are strict Observers of the Rules and Rites of the Church, and have never made any one Step to the Diminishing either of its Doctrine, Discipline, or Communion. And I think we may truly affirm, that the Dissenters are more afraid of his Majesties Design of Upholding and Maintaining the Church, than any Church-man is of his Altering or Overturning it.

The main of the matter is, the Dissenters would fain have Church-men entertain and publish such Fears of the Churches Danger under his Majesties Administration, to incense the Government against them, that they may find an Occasion to upbraid them with these Apprehensions, and make their own Advantages upon us by them, which is one of the Artifices and Devices of Dissenters, of which we are not ignorant.

But if the Church were in any Real Danger, which (thanks be to God) we have no just Cause to suspect, the Danger proceeds not from his Majesties Administration, upon whose Royal Promises, Principles, and Protection we may safely Relie; but from the Evil Principles and Practises

Practises of those who seek to corrupt its Doctrine by Heresies, to undermine its Discipline by Schism, and to divide its Worship and Communion by Separation; this is the Rise of all our Fears, and the Occasion of all the Troubles and Disturbances that annoy us.

Whereas This Author ascribes the Church-mens Fears sometimes to *Lutheran Enemies*, meaning the King and Royal Family, on purpose to traduce them to the Government, and to draw its Displeasure upon them.

At other times he affirms more truly, that the Churches Danger proceeds in a great measure from Atheists, Deists, Socinians, and the like; and not without Reason, for the Church ever was and will be in Danger from Men of bad Principles and wicked Lives.

But here too, He cannot forbear an invidious intimation, as if Church-men thought the Government design'd to advance Such as these for the Ruin of the Present Establishment. The Hinting whereof is no small Reflection on his Majesty and the Present Ministry.

Yea, to Render the Clergy Odious, and to Serve their own Ends upon them, He brings them in as *fearing the King himself to be a Presbyterian, and the Bishops to be generally of that Persuasion*, which is to slander the footsteps of God's Anointed, and to speak evil of Dignities. The Character of those that are reserv'd for the Judgment of the last Day.

But in these things this Author speaks more his own Wishes, than others Fears, for to shew how well he is pleas'd with this Subject, he tells a Story of a Clergy-man in Huntingdonshire, who lately inform'd his Friend, that many of his Parishioners had been fully perswaded, That the King goes to the Presbyterian-Meeting-Houses in London, and that One of their Number was lately made a Bishop, which they so firmly believ'd, that tho' he labour'd much in the point, yet could not convince them of the contrary.

Now how strange and absurd soever these things may appear to wise Men; 'tis not to be doubted, but this Author would gladly see them verified and brought to pass: and their Disciples would greatly rejoyce to find the Conventicles

venticles advanc'd upon the Ruins of the Church; so fond are they of Discord and Division, even when they talk most of Union.

But that which most sensibly touches this Pamphleter, is the Doctor's *representing this Danger as chiefly arising from that little kind of Men, the Dissenters*, where they who are great in their own Eyes cannot bear the being accounted or called *Little*, tho' the Lesson of Humility, and the Example of our Saviour would teach them to be lowly in Heart, and little in their own Eyes; and they who will be thought great here shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven. And yet this is the Guise of Dissenters, to Lessen others to Greaten themselves, and instead of *Esteeming others better than themselves*, to Blazon others Faults and to Magnifie their own Vertues. Hence this Pamphleter to exalt the Party tells us, *that were we better acquainted with them, we should find them more Considerable, than they are represented*, which Considerableness appears more in the great Trouble they give, than in any good Service they do either to King or Country. Their pretended Affection to the Government is no other than a Party-zeal, and their Aggravating the Misbehaviour of others, but a Pleading their own Merits to gain Favour to their Cause. So that the Churches Danger, if it be in any, must proceed chiefly from these men, who bear an evil Will to it, discover'd by their Destroying its Unity, and Withdrawing the People from its Worship and Communion; and if the Common Enemy ever comes in, it must be by the Breaches they have and continue to make among us. Their Rule is, *Divide & impera*, Divide the People to domineer over them. And because *a Church or House divided against it self cannot stand*, they promote Division to procure Dominion, or to compass its Destruction.

But there is one great Fear more of Church-mens (saith he) that mightily affects them, and that is, that the *Church of England Ministers will soon be expell'd, and the Dissenting Teachers (continuing such) will supply their places*. Which Fears (he saith) are grounded upon their Opinion of the King's Principles, which they take to be Presbyterian,

terian, and such as will incline him to eject all of a contrary Opinion, and to prefer such only as are of his own Persuasion.

Now here again, This Author declares more the Dissenters Wishes, than the Clergy's Fears, who are in no pain for those things, though tis more than probable, that their Enemies envy their Prosperity, and are too greedily gaping after their places; yet they can safely depend upon his Majesties justice, and the Security of good Laws in those matters. And though this Pamphleter talks too saucily of the King's Principles, and the Clergy's Properties, yet they are well satisfied in the Soundness and Security of both, and entertain no Fears or Distrusts of either.

These and such as these are the formidable things, that (he saith) Church men fear and give out, tho' they are much more in the Minds and Mouths of Dissenters, than they are in theirs, who are too well apprized of these things to be fear'd or freighted with such Bugbears. And these are the Pretended Fears (saith he) that the Doctor would have Allay'd at the dear price of Discountenancing and Discouraging the faithfull Dissenters.

But there are other Greater and more Real Fears (he tells us) which he believes the Doctor is not so much a Friend to his Brethren, as to desire to have them Allay'd. And they are, *They fear the Interests of King George are like to be Establish'd among us, and that the Pretender's Cause will become desperate and contemptible. They are afraid, that those great Men, who have the Honour to attend the Throne, will be secur'd of his Favour, by approving themselves faithfull to him, and well qualified for his Service. Again, they fear (as he goes on) that his Majesty will have Wisdom and Courage enough to keep his Enemies at a distance, and to bid them defiance.*

Now it cannot be suppos'd that any Church-man, at least any number of them should be so weak, as to discover or declare to Dissenters any such Fears as he mentions. And how he comes to dive so deep into the Secrets of Men's Hearts, as to discern the Thoughts and Fears, that lurk there, to which none but the Searcher of Hearts can be

be privy, is a thing somewhat unaccountable, to intrude into those secret things that belong to God, and are known to him only, cannot be excus'd from great Presumption. But to arraign Mens thoughts at an earthly Barr, that can take no Cognizance of them, and to judge and censure such Secrets as are only to be accounted for at God's Tribunal, is such a manifest Invasion of his Prerogative, as nothing but the Modesty or Charity of a Dissenter can prompt any to. But 'tis their pretended Love to King George and his Interest, which they take to be the best way of promoting their own, that makes them suspect such Fears in others, that they do not stand so well affected to him as they should.

Now one would think, that they who would be thought so highly to esteem so excellent a Prince, should cheerfully obey his Laws, and follow the excellent Example of his pious and regular Devotion, especially in those Prayers and Thanksgivings, that are offer'd up to the King of Kings for settling him upon the Throne for the Publick Good. But no, They can love and admire him without obeying or imitating him: they can give him good Words for dispensing with the Observance of his Laws; and the more for letting them do what is Right in their own eyes.

But is it not somewhat strange, that these Men should be so much enamour'd of a Prince, that commands such things as they cannot or will not do; and lays or continues such Burdens upon their Consciences, as they think too grievous to be born? And yet they say, 'tis the very joy of their Hearts, tho' it may be a grief to some Others, to see the King's Interest so firmly establish'd among us, who they hope will in time rid them of those Burdens, which they now groan under, and that He is above the Fears and Designs of those, that would obstruct such blessed Effects of his Clemency. But however, if they will take the Advice of a Friend. I would not have them to be too Confident, or to lay too much Stress upon such doubtful Matters, but to stay till some visible Steps are made in their Favour. And in the mean time to come as near as they can to the Pattern, which his Majesty him-

self hath set us, and to hearken to the wholesome Directions deliver'd by him from the Throne, for the settling Unity and Peace both in the Church and State.

Otherwise, the King may say to such Subjects, as our Saviour did to some of his Disciples, *why call ye me Lord and Master, and do not the thing that I command you?* or *why call ye me your King, and live not in obedience to my Laws?* *If you Love me, keep my Commandments*, and if you will approve your selves to be good Subjects, shew it by observing of my Statutes, and treading in the Steps of my Example; which will be a better Testimony of your Duty and Affection to me, than all the Flatteries of the Tongue, or the empty Sacrifices of Praise, which may seem to colour over your Divisions, but cannot cover or atone for your Disobedience.

In short then, Let Dissenters lay aside their fulsom Flattery; and Church-men cast off all needless and distrustful Fears of the Churches Safety. And let both Relie upon the good Providence of God, who hath founded his Church upon a Rock, and promised that the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And next under God, let us cast our selves upon the Protection of our Gracious Sovereign, who hath given his Royal Word for its Security, upon which we may safely depend, without disquieting our selves with any fearful or gloomy Apprehensions in these matters, or disturbing the Publick with the evil Effects and Consequents of them, which the Wisdom and Justice of the Government have taken so great Care to prevent.

Thus I have consider'd all that this Author says of the Pretended and Real Fears of some Church-men, which the Reverend Doctor would have to be Allay'd and Remov'd.

I should now proceed to what he offers about the Unreasonable Hopes of Dissenters, which the Doctor would have to be Suppress'd and Defeated, which shall be Consider'd in my next. In the mean time I am, Sir,

Yours A. B.

Second Letter.

S I R,

IN my Last I Consider'd the groundless Fears of some Church-men Represented in this Pamphlet; I come now in this to Consider the Unreasonable Hopes and Expectations of Dissenters freely declar'd in the same; to shew how well the Doctor Advis'd to the Allaying the One, and Suppressing the Other.

And here the Pamphleter tells us, that *the most sanguine Expectants among them are hoping for a time, when God Almighty will Diffuse a Spirit of Love and Union among Christians.*

But how can they hope for that which they have all along and still continue to oppose? Have not all ordinary Means been us'd to unite and cement Men's Minds in one Communion? and would they have God Almighty to work another Miracle, and pour down the Holy Ghost again to Convince them by Inspiration of what hath been so plainly shew'd and urg'd upon them? and yet they expect a time when God will in some extraordinary Manner gratifie their fond Desires and Imaginations in these matters. Hath not Enough been said and written by many Pious and Learned Men to satisfie all wise and well meaning Persons? and how absurd must it be for them to talk so much of their Love of Union, who love and live by Divisions, and make it their main Business to Promote and Propagate them? Is not the Schism merely upheld by some crafty Teachers deluding the Ignorant Vulgar, and humouring the more Knowing of them for their own Ends? This is so obvious that all, that will but open their Eyes, and have no Bias to the Contrary, cannot but see and acknowledge it. Certainly if Obstinacy in Error make an Heretick, these Men may justly be Reckon'd of that Number, who have improv'd their Schism into Heresy, and destroy'd that Love and Unity, which they seem to Call for and Cry up.

But 'tis not from all but only from the better Members of the Establish'd Church (as he calls them) that they hope for this Love and Union; that is from those who Prevaricate with the Church to please them; These he Courts and Compliments as the best Members of the Church, because by their forbearing some Parts of Conformity they Countenance them in rejecting the Whole. These are the Darlings of Dissenters, from whom all their Hopes and Expectations come, which should put these Half Conformists upon considering the many Evils and Dangers that proceed from this Lukewarmness; how it hardens the Dissenters in their Schism, weakens the Church and lays it open to the Assaults and Designs of all its Enemies.

But the Love and Union they hope for is not to unite in the Establish'd Church, but such an Union as shall Dispose the better Members to admit their Dissenting Brethren into it. And such an Union they may have upon the same Terms that all others are admitted into it, and which all Churches admit of.

But that will not do, they would be admitted upon the Terms of Christ, meaning their own Terms, which are to Pray and Preach and do in it what and how they please: whereas Christ's Terms are far otherwise, for he would have none continu'd in it, but such as bear the Church, that is, obey the Rules and Dictates of it: and for others that neglect to bear the Church, and to submit to it, he would have them accounted no better than An Heathen Man and a Publican, i. e. as no Members of it. And the Apostle's direction is, that all things in the Church be done Decently, and in Order, and to the Use of Edifying, of which things the Governours of the Church may be reasonably thought the best Judges; and all humble and modest Christians will think it reasonable for Orders sake to submit to them. These are the Terms and Directions prescrib'd by Christ and his Apostles, which the Church of England hath piously and punctually observ'd and kept to, and perhaps more and better than any other Church in the Christian World beside.

And yet these good Men would Over-rule all their Authority in these things, and must have these good Orders laid aside to have their Company. • How-

However, they are so Civil and Good-natur'd as to be willing that Church-men should Retain the Human Additions they approve of to themselves, and to Obey their own Orders; but they would have them *Cease from imposing them on those, who cannot Comply with them without Sin*; without some worldly Advantage; he should have said, for 'tis plain they Can and Do comply with them for an Office to gain Power, and to serve some secular Turn: but they Cannot or rather Will not comply with them for the better Ends of the Church, to promote its much desir'd Peace and Union: they are content to let Church-men Retain what their Dissenting Teachers call old Traditions and human Additions, in hopes they shall be able to deceive the People into a better Opinion of their new Inventions, and by that means drain the Churches to fill the Conventicles.

In short *they hope* (as he tells us) *that for the Glory of God and the Good of his Church those things may be Remov'd, that have brought them under a necessity of Dissenting.*

But pray, what necessity is there of Dissenting from that for the Churches Peace, which they can consent to and comply with for any worldly Profit? Is the Glory of God to be advanced by Removing all Order and Decency in his Worship, or is the Churches Good to be promoted by what so manifestly tends to Divide and Undermine it? Be not deceiv'd, God is not mock'd, nor will a wise Government be misled by any such Feigned and Hypocritical Pretences; good Words and fair Speeches may deceive the Hearts of the Simple, but wise Men easily see through them, and *the Deplorable Effects which they themselves own to have followed upon their Dissensions*, may instead of Encouraging, Prompt them to put a Stop to that Fountain of Evil, from whence so many Miseries and Troubles flow. But to Prevent this, the Party seek to draw in some great Men to favour and support them, and therefore farther hope, *that a due Regard will be had to what hath been advanc'd by some of the greatest Men, that ever adorn'd the Church, amongst whom they mention the late learned Bishop Stillingfleet, and his Grace the present Archbishop of Canterbury.*

What

What they quote from the former is from a Book, for which that learned Bishop (to excuse the mistakes of it) pleaded its being written by him in his younger years, and in a time of Trouble before his Judgment was ripe enough to be well settled in those matters, and therefore often desir'd that no stress might be laid upon it, nor any ill Use made of it, to prevent which, he after retracted the Errors of it in a Sermon intitled *The Mischief of Separation*, wherein he strenuously asserts the Churches Power of making Rules of external Order and Decency, and the Peoples Duty of Observing them in Divine Worship, and that no Separation was to be made from the Church by any Pretence to the contrary, which he after more largely defended in his Book of the Unreasonableness of Separation, against all the Dissenting Schriblers of his time. So that nothing can be gain'd by that Quotation, but only to shew, what aukward Commenders they are of great Men, to mention their Mistakes to adorn their Character.

What is quoted from his Grace the present Archbishop of Canterbury is so far from serving their Purpose, that it makes clearly against them, for his Grace affirms, that tho' there may be some Differences in matters of lesser moment in good and zealous Christians, yet these ought not to hinder their Agreeing in one Common Bond of Charity, and if possible, in one Common Worship of God too. Now that this is possible, they own by their own Practice, for they Joyn with us sometimes in the highest Acts of Conformity, which being possible for them to do, his Grace directs them to Do it always, and to Joyn in one constant Bond of Fellowship and Communion, and to stir up others to do the same. Moreover he tells them, that Peace and Unity are ever to be Desir'd, and especially at that time when he thus advis'd them: but yet Order and Decency are still to be Preserv'd, and Conformity to them to be no longer Broken. And now what Encouragement can they have from hence to hope for any such Abatements and Alterations to be made in the Church, by so wise and good a Metropolitan. Yea, his Graces late noble and glorious Defence of the Power and Rights of the Church against an Encroachment, that was making
upon

upon both, may for ever Dash all their Hopes, and turn them into Despair of finding any Countenance or Concurrence with them in such Designs.

But because they have been so often and so justly Upbraided with their Occasional Conformity, as a palpable Instance of their Hypocrisy, that lays as a Stumbling Block in their Way, and hinders the Compassing of their main End; they are not ashamed to acknowledge (as this Author tells us) *that they hope for Repealing a Law, for which they cannot but fear, that God hath a Controversy with the Land.* Now this Law is the Test Act, which was made for the Security of the Establish'd Church, to keep both Popish and Protestant Recusants, its two great Enemies, out of it. For which Reason they have both struggled in different Ways to have it Repeal'd, and as our Saviour was Crucified between two Thieves, so the Church hath been often in danger of being Sacrific'd between these two Adversaries.

King James the Second labour'd in it with great industry; with whom the Dissenters joyn'd with equal Diligence and Application, tho' for different Ends; the One to bring in Popery, the Other to bring in Presbytery upon the Ruin of the establish'd Church. But thanks be to God, who hath hitherto Deliver'd it, and we trust will still Deliver it from both those Enemies, by preserving this Law as a Battery for the Church, and a Bulwork against all that Design or Contrive against it.

But the Dissenters (saith he) *cannot but fear that God, hath a Controversy with the Land for this Law.* But why should they fear such a Controversy from the God of Peace, who is slow to Wrath, of great Goodness, and easy to be Reconcil'd, if he hath any Anger against us for this Law, 'tis not for the making, continuing, or observing of it, for thereby we pay a solemn Duty both to God and the King; and taking the Holy Sacrament requir'd by it, is a good Preparation for any Office or Place of Trust, and conduces much to the faithful Discharge of it.

But 'tis for the Breaking and Disobeying of it, either by a Profane neglect of the Holy Sacrament, or by an Hypocritical taking it only for secular Ends.

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These things may indeed Provoke him, and Create some Controversy between us, but the Keeping this Law by a worthy Receiving the Lord's Supper is a good means of making Peace and Removing all Controversies with God and Man.

The truth is, the Repealing of this Law would be the Removing of the Churches Fence, and that would be the Letting in, either of the wild Boar of the Forrest to root it up, or of the little Foxes to undermine it, which instead of Ending would Raise more and fiercer Controversies, for that would set Papists and Puritans Contending for the Power, and Striving who should be Uppermost, which would fill the Land with nothing but Misery and Confusion, and therefore we are concern'd to pray to God and our Governours to preserve this Law to prevent the evil Designs of both.

But in this Law (saith he) *one of the most sacred Institutions of our Religion is prostituted to a mean and secular Purpose.* But by whom is this done, is it not by the occasional Conformists, that come to this sacred Institution only to serve some secular End? The Law was intended as a Test to distinguish Good Subjects from Bad, and to try their Integrity, to admit the Good into Power, and exclude the Bad, and to engage them to Fidelity by one of the highest Acts of Religion, viz. by a sincere and devout Receiving the holy Sacrament. But if any dissolute Persons or Dissenters creep in by a Profane or Hypocritical Use of this sacred Institution, the Fault is not in the Law, which is Good if it be us'd lawfully, but in the Persons that use it otherwise. Nor is the Law, but the Persons to be blam'd or Remov'd for the Abuse of it. But he hath something farther to say of many provoking Sins occasion'd by this Law, in a following Paper, where I shall follow him when it comes in course.

Furthermore, *Dissenters cannot but hope to be deliver'd from some unnatural Grievances, that were brought upon them for their faithfull Adherence to the Protestant Succession and the Present Government.* What these unnatural Grievances are, he doth not think fit to mention, and perhaps he may be hard put to it to declare, for I think

no Persons in the World that have dissented from and liv'd in opposition to the establish'd Laws, have found greater Favour, enjoyed more Liberty, and felt less Grievances, than these querelous and ungrateful Complainants. If they have suffer'd from the Outrage of Mobs, Tumults, and Riots, which owe their Rise to Factions and Parties, and in which Church-men have suffer'd as much, if not more than they, they must be content to bear a Share in those common Miseries and Calamities, which their own Dissensions have unhappily Occasion'd, and which their Unit-ing with the establish'd Church would soon put an end to.

But instead of that, they hope lastly, not only to be Continu'd in their old way of Disturbing the Church; *but to be Restor'd to the Privilege and Right of bringing up their Children according to their own Sentiments*, that is, to instill into them the same Principles of Aversion and Separation from the Church, which themselves have imbibed and followed, and so to Propagate the Schism to Posterity, and Derive the Imposture to future Generations. They are unwilling the Schism should Die with them, or that the Church should ever be settled in Peace and Order, and therefore desire to have Schools and Seminaries of their own to breed up Children and Disciples to Succeed them in the great Work of Dividing and Deceiving the People, and to raise up a New Race of Disturbers for the Edification of Posterity.

These are the Unreasonable Hopes of Dissenters, which the Doctor would have Suppress'd, for which this Author makes many and grievous Complaints, and to be Reveng'd upon him, would have all his Hopes of a Bishoprick and Church Preferment to be suppress'd: baiting him with an empty and impertinent Harangue, and threatening what the Zeal of a provok'd Dissenter, if let loose, might do to him. However he will restrain it, and forbear, hoping he will reconsider and retract what he said to that great Auditory, and since publish'd to the World; thus giving him many hard words for a Discourse for which the House of Commons gave him many thanks. But it is no new thing with them to set up their own Wisdom above all the Wisdom of the Nation.

The Remaining Part of the Letter is taken up with vain and frequent Boastings of the Dissenters great Love to King George and the Royal Family; of their great Zeal for the Protestant Succession and Present Government, and the many and great Sufferings they have undergone for their constant Adhering to them, which things neither need or require any farther Reply.

And therefore I shall Proceed in my next to the following Paper, intitled, *the Case of the Protestant Dissenters Represented and Argu'd.* In the mean time I am, Sir,

Your humble Serv. A. B.

Third Letter.

S I R,

HAVING shew'd the Groundless Fears of some Church-men, which the Doctor would have allay'd, and the Unreasonable Hopes and Expectations of Dissenters, which he would have suppress'd, together with the Just Grounds and Reasons of both, the Subject of the first Pamphlet. I proceed to consider another annex'd to it, intitled, *the Case of the Protestant Dissenters Represented and Argu'd*, which being much of the same Stamp, and fraught with the same trifling Objections with the former, will not need or deserve any new or large Reply; 'tis indeed to be wondred at, how Men can have the face to urge and insist upon such light matters, to overbear the weight of Government, or think by such empty and slender Cavils, which have been so often baffl'd and expos'd, to run down the Authority of good Laws.

But 'tis hard to part with an usefull and belov'd Error, and to lose the Interest and Reputation gain'd with the People by such means, which makes them catch hold of every twig to support a bad and sinking Cause.

But to come to the Pamphlet; It begins with *the Common Obligation that all Men lie under, to worship God in the Publick Assemblies*, and because this may and ought to be done in the solemn Assemblies of the Church of England,

land, these Absenters and Dissenters from them must have something to say to countenance their Separation. And after all the hard shifts they are put to about it, they can say no more than this, *that some things are annex'd to the Publick Worship, which they cannot allow of or comply with.*

Now what are these things which they call Additions to the Law of God, and complain of as Will-worship and Superstition? Why. Nothing but a few circumstantial Rites and Ceremonies, such as Time, Place, and the Postures of Devotion, which they themselves together with us Acknowledge to be no essential Parts of Religion, nor in themselves necessary, but injoyn'd only for the good Order, Decency, and Uniformity of Publick Worship, things no where forbidden by any Law of God, and every where commanded by the Laws of Men, yea and commanded too by the general Rules of Scripture, which require Order and Edification in Divine Service, and Obedience to Superiours in such things.

And must it not be great Perverseness and Prevarication in these Persons, to pretend Conscience, for the leaving the establish'd Worship requir'd by the Laws of God and Man, and to set up another Worship in opposition to it forbidden by the Laws of Both? and yet this is the Case of our querelous Dissenters, who interpret the enjoyning such indifferent things, as are manifestly in the Church's Power to command, to be the *Denying them the Worship of God, and disowning them for Christians, and tending to let in Paganism upon us.* Things which they themselves neither can or do believe.

But they would yeild Obedience to these things, if they did not judge them Sinfull; But why should they judge them Sinfull, when there is no Law to forbid them? *Is not Sin the Transgression of the Law, and where there is no Law, there is no Transgression,* and is it not a Sin to make more Sins and Duties than God has made so? to do things not requir'd with an Opinion of their Necessity, and to abstain from things not prohibited, with an Opinion of their Unlawfulness, are both of them Additions to the Substance of Religion, and may be justly reckon'd Peices of Superstition and Will-worship, and God may ask the Doers of

them in both Cases, *who both requir'd these things at your hands?* Hence we find the Apostle condemning those, who said of Meats not forbidden, *touch not, tast not, handle not, which things perish in the Using.* And the same may be said of *kneel not, wear not such a garment, use not a form of prayer,* and the like, which being under no Prohibition by any Divine Law, cannot be thought Sinfull without Superstition; the contrary whereunto, being under the Command of Ecclesiastical and Human Laws, cannot be omitted without Disobedience.

And yet (saith our Author) *the Dissenters own that they have been wont to Meet, however in distinct Assemblies, to worship God in a way which their Consciences could approve of, and have many years continu'd so to do.* And indeed so they have to the great Disturbance and Disorder of the whole Kingdom, for themselves acknowledge that *many deplorable Effects have follow'd upon it;* yea we may truly affirm, that most of the Troubles and Confusions of the Nation have from thence had their Original. All which owe their Rise to the Separate Meetings and Practises of Sectaries, against the known establish'd Laws; the Mischief and Inconveniences whereof may perhaps open the Eyes of Superiours to see reason enough to give no farther Countenance or Continuance to such Divisions, and to stop that Fountain from whence so many and great Evils flow.

But here our Author falls into the wonted Way of Dissenting Writers, which is more by Queries than Positions, and therefore thinks fit to enquire.

First, whether the Dissenters are to be blam'd for their *holding distinct Meetings from the Church, for the Worship of God.* To which the true answer is, yes. For this is a plain *setting up altar against altar,* a thing expressly forbidden by God himself, as a *Rebellion against the Lord, and against his Ministers,* Josh. 22. 19. for which *Divisions of Reuben's there were great thoughts and searchings of heart,* and such as occasion'd great Troubles, till they utterly disclaim'd the opposite Altar as a place of Worship, but design'd only as a Witness between them and future Generations, saying, *God forbid that we should rebell against the Lord, and turn away from serving him, by building an Altar*

Altar for burnt Offerings and Sacrifices, besides the Altar of the Lord that is before his Tabernacle, vers. 29. To set up different places and ways of Worship in opposition to an establish'd Church, naturally breeds Differences in the Minds, Hearts, and Affections of the Worshippers; it occasions Sidings, Parties, and Factions, which break the Peace and Unity of the Church, and unavoidably creates Fewds and Animosities: they that cannot goe to the House of God together as Friends, commonly prove Enemies, and fall into Hatred, Discord, and Designing against one another, as wofull Experience too sadly verifies.

But they cannot but esteem (saith he) *the Obligation of the universal, natural, divine Law, by which they are bound solemnly to worship God, to be above that of positive, topical, and human Laws, requiring Additaments to divine Worship, and prohibiting their Worship without them.* The sence of which, if there be any in it, is that the universal Law requiring the Worship of God Supercedes all Obedience to positive and human Laws made for the decent and orderly Performance of it, and Leaves all Men to worship God how and in what manner they please, which is a Principle of Confusion, that contradicts all the general Rules of Scripture, and opens a Gap for all manner of Disorders and Indecencies in divine Worship. And here he adds, that *the Church of England bath engross'd not only all divine Worship, but all civil Power to it self, and confin'd the Privileges of Christian and Human Society to its own Members.*

This is indeed the great Grievance that lies at the bottom of all; they cannot without Conformity arrive at those Places of Trust and Power, which they would fain have without it. But the bare mentioning of this is sufficient to discover, the Absurdity, the Pride, and Hypocrisy of such Complaints.

But he queries secondly, *whether the Laws enjoyning such Additions to Religion, and excluding them from the Worship and Communion of it ought to have been made.*

Here he calls in question the Wisdom and Equity of the Laws, and reflects either upon the Ability or Integrity of the Law-givers in enacting Laws not fit to be made, and such as cannot honestly and with good Conscience be observ'd.

But

But I leave them to the Judgment and Censure of our Law-makers, to answer for such bold and unbecoming Reflections.

Again, He queries thirdly, whether such Laws so unjustly made *should be continu'd*? Here he not only sets their own Wisdom above the Wisdom of all their Superiours, but likewise prescribes to them, and directs them to undo what they have rashly and unjustly done, and not to continue Laws, which shut them out of all civil Power, and deprive them of Places and Offices, which they greedily thirst after. These are the great things they drive at in all their Contention about these little matters.

'Tis the Ceremonies and Additaments to Religion, (as they call them) that must bear the blame of their Ambition and Avarice; But is Religion to be perform'd without some of those Additaments? and must divine Service be strip'd of all Form and Comeliness, that makes it desireable, meerly to serve their secular Ends? Are not Time, and Place, and Gesture, such as kneeling, sitting, standing, and the like, necessary Circumstances of all religious Acts? and is it not much better to see Men agree and joyn together in the same Postures of Devotion, than to see them clash and vary and differ about such indifferent things? Does not the Order and Decency requir'd in holy Scripture mainly consist in those things? and how can that be observ'd and kept to, without some to order and appoint them? these things are so plain and obvious, that any unprejudic'd Person may easily see the Reasonableness & Usefulness of them; And Men may as well declaim against Pulpits, and Reading Desks for preaching and praying; against Fonts for baptizing, with all the Vessels and Utensils of the Temple, as against the comely Rites, Usages, and other Ceremonies of divine Worship, which stand upon the same foot, and are within the Power of the Church to ordain and Command. And yet this Author harangues about these matters, as sinfull Additions to Christianity, that *they deprive God Almighty of his Right in his Creatures, and that none may make such Laws, but He that made the World*, with other like crafty Insinuations fram'd on purpose to beguile unwary People.

But

But after all, These Men (whatever they pretend) do not believe themselves, or judge these things to be Sinfull; nor to hold any Place, or to qualifie them for any Office; they can do all that the Church requires, even to the taking the holy Sacrament according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England; which things, did they judge them Sinfull, their tender Consciences would not allow them to do. But since they can do all this without any scruple or regret, 'tis plain they must be inwardly well enough satisfied about them. But *suppose* (saith he) *these Rites were none of them simply Unlawful, yet whilst the misinform'd Minds of Dissenters cannot judge them Lawfull; they have nothing else left them, but to forbear the Use of them and to serve God otherwise.*

This is a subtile Way of shifting and evading of any Law, and escaping the Penalty of breaking it, for 'tis but to say or think it Unlawful, how truly or falsely it matters not, and their misinform'd Minds shall give them a Dispensation from all Obedience to it. Is not this an easier Way than that of *Corban* to vacate the Commandments, and to excuse them from all Duty, either to Natural or Civil Parents. The Pharisees made void the Laws by their Traditions; but these Men can null the injunctions of Superiours by their own Imaginations, and render them of no Effect by their mistaken Opinions. May not this set aside the Obligation of all Laws, and not only allow, but encourage all Disobedience to them.

If these Men's Minds are so unsettled and misinform'd as they pretend, they are not to acquiesce in their Errors, and think themselves safe in going on in them, but to seek out for better Information, and to that end, to be humble, teachable, and willing to receive Instruction, to suspect their own Judgment, when it crosses that of their Superiours, who may be well enough suppos'd to know more, and to see farther into such things than they can; and not think by their affected Ignorance and Obstinacy to overrule all Order and Government.

But they have made it their Business (saith he) *to enquire and search into the nature of these things, and being urged by a long tract of severe Sufferings, have refus'd no means*

means that might tend to their Satisfaction, and cannot yet be so happy, as to conquer what they think their just Scruples.

If this were truly and really their Case, it might justly call for some Pity and Forbearance; but if it be only pretended to serve a Turn, it must enhance the Guilt of their Disobedience, and make their Sin the greater. However even in this Case, if they are sincere they must and will go as far as they can with the Church, and *whereunto they have already attain'd, walk by the same Rule.* And then God in his due time will in the use of all good means *Reveal the rest unto them.*

But to put (if possible) a final and effectual Stop to this groundless Pretence, of the sinfulness of the Rites and Ceremonies enjoyn'd by the Church of England, Let this Author or any other instance in any one of them, and produce their Doubts and Reasons against it; and I dare promise them an answer to their satisfaction, if they are willing or capable of receiving it.

But the great Outcry is against the Sacramental Test, which this Author tells us hath put the Dissenters *into a Fit of Trembling, for bringing it down so low as to the Keeper of an Ale-house.*

To receive the Sacrament aright in remembrance of our Saviour is a matter of Joy and Comfort, and a good Introduction into all Business, to procure a Blessing upon it, and is a fit Qualification for any Office from the highest to the lowest: but to receive it profanely and hypocritically, only for the sake of an Office, especially if the Mind be against it, is matter of Trembling indeed, and may fill all such Partakers of it with Horror and Confusion for profaning the Lord's Body, and prostituting this sacred Ordinance to vile and base Ends.

And here he tells us a Story of *One of a loose Life prest by Officers to receive the Sacrament, when he knew himself unfit for it. However was prevail'd upon by threats and fears to receive it, but at the holy Action declar'd to some that were present, that he came only to avoid being undone, and took them to witness that he receiv'd it only as common Bread and Wine, not daring to receive it as the Body*
and

and Blood of Christ. That there are some unworthy Receivers of this holy Ordinance, who come to it for bad Ends, is a sad Truth to be acknowledg'd and bewail'd, Judas receiv'd the Lord's Supper to betray his Master, and some occasionally come to it to betray the Church. Which may be a Caution to amend and avoid such Abuses, but can be no reason to neglect and lay aside the Duty.

The Design of the State in the Test Act was to distinguish between the Friends & the Foes of the Government, to know who were fit to be employ'd in Places of Trust in it, and who not, and to admit the one and exclude the other. And because Papists and Presbyterians have been found to be the two great Enemies of the Constitution, its intent was to shut out Both from having any share in its Administration.

The Design of the Church in the same Act was by the highest Act of Worship and Communion to oblige those to be religious and faithful in the Discharge of the several Places and Offices, who were thought fit to be call'd to and employ'd in them: & what wiser Method could be thought of for the Safety and Security of the whole?

Now to call for the Repeal of this so useful and necessary a Law, is to defeat the good Designs of both, & to let in a whole Torrent of Errors, Sects, and Divisions upon us to the great Disturbance, if not Destruction, of the Constitution in Church and State, which no doubt the Wisdom of the Government will take all possible care to prevent.

And yet this profane Pamphleter makes the eating of Christ's Body and Blood no better Qualification for an Office, then the eating of blood and black-pudding, pag. 36. which plainly discovers the Profaneness that lies hid under their plausible Pretences of Holiness.

After this, speaking of the holy Table, he would fain know whose it is, whether it be the Table of this or that Party, or the Lord's Table? Now the Dissenters make it the Table of a Party by confining it to themselves, and admitting none to it but their own Sects. Whereas the Church shews it to be the Lord's Table, by leaving it free and open to all that are willing and well dispos'd to come to it, with our Saviour inviting *all that are weary and heavy laden*

with their Sins, and sending Servants into the Streets and lanes of the City to bring in the Poor, the Maim'd, the Halt, and the Blind, yea, into the high-ways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that his House may be fill'd: whereby she hath taken down those arbitrary Inclosures, that hinder Union and Peace in the Christian World, and receives all upon the easy and gracious Terms of her Lord.

Thus I have consider'd all the material Passages of your Second Pamphlet, in my next I shall examine the Third, in the mean time I am, Sir,

Your humble Serv. A. B.

S I R, Fourth Letter.

I receiv'd another Pamphlet from you, intitl'd, *A plain Discovery of what the Dissenters would be at, in some reasonable Reflections on the foregoing Pamphlet.* In which I expected to have met with such Reflections, as might have driven the Dissenters to a Despair of Obtaining their Unreasonable Hopes, and to look for Nothing, but the more Effectual Suppressing of them: But instead of that, I find him *Jehu-like* driving furiously the contrary Way; and falling into great Discontents, because their Hopes are not answer'd presently.

In the Beginning of the Letter he falls foul upon some of his Brethren the Dissenters, for thinking and saying, that the Discovery of their Hopes is made too soon, and blaming the former Pamphlet for being highly Unseasonable, since by that they have anger'd some of their best Friends, in making this too early Discovery, wishing that they had gone on more slowly, and waited for a more convenient Juncture, as the best means of attaining their desir'd End.

This the present Pamphleter takes to be the Advice of only Pretended not Real Friends to the Dissenters, who are for making more speedy Work of it, and fear that by Delays Opportunities may be lost, that might have been improv'd to their advantage, which may not be easily regain'd.

The Doctor's representing (saith he) the Dissenters to be a few Contemptible Persons, and asserting their Hopes to be

be Unreasonable and fit to be suppress'd, before such a Publick and Honorable Body as the House of Commons, makes it the proper season to answer the Charge and appear in their Defence, lest the Accusation should make too great Impression on some Men's Minds to their prejudice, and sink too deep to be remov'd.

But for this let them agree it among themselves, it is no way material to us, who judge their Hopes to be both Unreasonable and Unseasonable at all times. However, if they will take my Advice, I would have them take heed of falling out among themselves, for that may tend more to the Defeating of their Hopes, than any other means of Suppressing them; it may endanger the losing the Men of Moderation and tenderness towards them in the Church, who by their unseasonable Applications, and craving too much, may be disgusted and turn upon them to the great hindrance of their Designs. This they are advis'd to be aware of, for he has heard them (as he tells us) objecting and muttering among themselves; *that the Dissenters acted a very uncivil & ungrateful Part towards their Low-Church Friends, when they offer any thing of that sort in their own behalf.* Adding that by expecting Favour in such unreasonable Demands, their moderate Friends suffer a great deal of Odium, Reproach, and Calumny, being revil'd as Presbyterians, and betrayers of the Church, for being thought to have a greater tenderness for them than they really have.

In answer whereunto the Author of this Pamphlet tells them, that herein they suffer no more, than what Christianity teaches them patiently to bear. By which they may easily see, how much the Church, and themselves too, suffer by such Luke-warmness.

But the main Business of this Pamphlet, is *A plain Discovery of what the Dissenters would be at*, in which they should be very cautious; for a plain Discovery of bad Designs, is the ready way to defeat them. However to deal the more plainly; this Author will tell us first negatively, what they would not be at; and then positively, what they would have: both which call for an impartial Examination.

First then he tells us, that *they are not for Undermining the Church, or bringing her into any Danger, which some*

have falsly laid to their Charge, who are not for attempting any thing that might be inglorious, or any way disadvantageous to Her. This looks like a fair and honest Insinuation, *Sed quid verba audiam, facta dum videam?* what heed is to be given to words, when deeds confute them? Can any thing tend more to the Subverting and Undermining of a Church, than making Breaches in it? do's not our Saviour say, that *an House divided against it self cannot stand, but is brought to Desolation?* And are not Separate Meetings, which they would have upheld and encourag'd, plain Divisions and Deviations from an establish'd Church? can any thing more expose & endanger a Church, than to be continually declaiming against the Rules and Orders of it; and perswading the People, that the Terms of its Communion are Sinfull, which they themselves shew by their own Practise, that they do not believe to be so? is it not a great Prevarication to do a thing as Lawfull, and at the same time declare it to be Sinfull? And yet this is no Undermining of the Church, or attempting any thing Inglorious, or Disadvantageous to it, then which nothing can tend more to Disparage or Subvert it; and therefore he would by no means be thought to be at any such thing.

But what then are they for? why! they good Men are altogether for *an Union with the Church*, and such an Union too, as *might render her more illustrious, and safe, more beautiful, and amiable in the eyes of God and good Men.* They would make it more *illustrious* by setting up more new and false Lights in it, or by opening its Doors and Windows to let in the Sun to shine upon it. They would make it more *safe* by breaking down its Fence and Bullworks, and letting in its Enemies upon it. They would make it more *beautiful*, by stripping it of its Ornaments, and depriving it of all Order and Comeliness, by which means tho' it might be more deform'd in the Sight of God, yet would it be more *amiable* in the Sight of these good Men.

But *they aim at nothing more* (saith he) *than what many of the greatest Lights, that have ever shone in the Church, have earnestly desir'd and labour'd to accomplish, as might be made appear from several Accounts contain'd in our Histories.*

Now here this Author is either in the dark as to the Designs

signs of those great Lights, or else would willingly represent them in a false Light to the World, for those great Lights never intended to lay aside the Rules of Order and Decency in God's Service, or let Men loose to their own Inventions in Divine Worship; nor can he find in our, or any other History, an Account of any Church or Society, that admitted or allow'd any to be Members of it, that refus'd to submit to the Rules and Orders thereof.

There was indeed, in the days of K. William III. a Design forming by a few great Men, of enlarging the Terms of Communion, for the gaining of the Dissenters to the Church, by shewing favour to some well-meaning Persons among them, and giving them time to overcome their Scruples and Prejudices.

But this Project, upon the first Discovery of it, was so universally decry'd and exploded by all sound Church-men, that it was soon laid aside, as neither safe nor practicable; Judging, that the Dissenters, who make Confusion enough already out of the Church, would make much more if receiv'd into it.

Now here 'tis obvious to observe, how ready they are to trump up baffl'd Arguments, defeated Designs, unadvis'd Expressions, or any thing that may help to countenance or colour their Divisions; which may teach us to keep close to the antient Rules and Practises of the Church, and to beware of writing or dropping any thing in favour of Faction, which they, that are addicted to it, are so apt to catch at and make an ill Use of to serve their bad Ends.

But to proceed, *the Dissenters* (saith this Pamphleter) *are not desirous that the Ceremonies should be extorted from those, who are fond of them; but that they may not be impos'd on those, who must sin if they comply with them.* The Sence whereof is, that they can be content that others should be kept to their Duty of Obedience to Superiours, & would not have the Ceremonies by any means to be extorted from them, having (as he wisely intimates) such a foolish fondness for them. But for themselves, who have no such fond Opinion of them, they cannot bear the Yoke, and therefore would not have it put upon their Necks, for *they must sin, if they comply with them*, this is the frequent & feign'd Pretence

Pretence for their Disobedience; for which they must be so often told, that herein they shew themselves to be self condemn'd Sinners, for they do that without remorse, which they say they cannot do without Sin, which cannot be excus'd from great Hypocrisy.

Besides, this if true can be no small Reflection on the Government, for if the things commanded cannot be done without Sin, then must the Government sin in commanding the doing of them; for it is *establishing Iniquity by a Law*, and the Magistrate would not be *the Minister of God for good*, but for evil to us, which would be great Presumption to affirm or alledge as an Excuse for their Schism and Disobedience.

But the Dissenters (as he go's on) would not have any good Law, that really secures the true *Interest* of Church or State, abolish'd or weaken'd; where by good Laws they mean, not such as are good in the Sight of the Government, for they are for weakening and abolishing of them, but such as are good in their own Sight, for these good Men can do nothing, *but what is right in their own Eyes*; and their good Laws are such as countenance the Conventicle, and encourage Divisions: these they would have, not only continu'd, but establish'd. But for the good Laws of Superiours enacted for the Security and Uniformity of the Church, these must, not only be weaken'd, but abolish'd, which, sometimes by open and avow'd Means, sometimes by secret and insinuating Methods, they labour hard to accomplish: But how come they, who live in a direct Opposition to the establish'd Laws in Church and State, to take upon them to prescribe Laws to their Betters? and instead of being punish'd for the Breach, call for the Abrogation of good Laws? This is another piece of the Pride and Presumption of the Dissenters, to excuse which this Pamphleter tells us,

That if *they apprehend any thing to be an Iniquity establish'd by Law, or a National Sin* (tho' they apprehend it never so falsely) these good Men *fearing God, and wishing well to their Country*, instead of obeying cannot but *wish and endeavour for the repealing such Laws*. But may not the publick Wisdom of the Nation be suppos'd to be better

Judges

Judges in such matters, then any private Persons? & would not an ordinary Degree of Modesty and Humility make them suspect their own Judgment, & stoop to it too, when it contradicts that of our Superiours? the wise Man tells us, that *there is more hopes of a Fool, if he be humble, than of such who are thus Wise in their own Conceit*; our Governours Judge, and very rightly, that enacting Laws in favour of Conventicles and separate Meetings from an establish'd Church, would be establishing Schism a great Iniquity by Law; which none may well think or fear from so wise a Body; and yet these are the Wishes and Endeavours of the Dissenters. And are not these wise Dictators fit to be consulted in Making and Repealing Laws?

After this, this Author refers us to a Pamphlet styl'd, *A Letter from a Gentleman in Scotland to his Friend in England, against the Sacramental Test*; which being the greatest Eye-sore and chief Remora of all their Designs, they are at every turn calling for the Repeal of it, to that end, they are still mustering up all their Force against it, and seem to be restless and impatient 'till they have batter'd down that Bullwork of the Church, which we trust will prove impregnable, and hold out against all their Assaults. They complain of it, as *dangerous to the Ecclesiastical Constitution of Presbytery in Scotland*; and for that reason 'tis fit to be preserv'd, to keep Presbytery out of England. But 'tis inconsistent (say they) with the Civil Interest of great Britain in general: meaning 'tis inconsistent with their Interest by excluding them from all Places of Profit or Trust, or any Share in the Government, which cannot be well manag'd without coming into their hands.

But least they should be thought too much to consult their own Interest herein, they add that 'tis contrary to our Saviour's Design in instituting the Lord's Supper, and to the Doctrine of the Church of England. But how or wherein they do not tell us, and we, who know it to be a sacred Tye and Obligation to Fidelity in Church or State, cannot believe it to be any way Prejudicial to either, but rather very consistent and agreeable with the Design of Christ and his Church in both. But here they amplify and say, that *the Dissenters do not design that any good Men, true to*
the

the Interest of Christ, the King, and the Publick, should lose any Advantages they are possess'd of, or stand fair for: but that all, who answer that Character, may have a legal Capacity to serve under them. Now here again, by good Men they mean themselves, or those that favour them, for their Goodness extends no farther; these are the only Men in their Opinion, that are true to the Interests of Christ, the King, and the Publick, where they make no mention of the Church, for they care not to encourage any to be true to that.

But for the before mention'd honest Men, and true, they would not have them lose any Advantage, or be excluded any Offices, provided that they may come in for a Share.

Do not these Men talk here, as if that they would have the Disposing of all Places and Offices, and give them to whom they think fit? And is it not pity that these good Men are not advis'd with in Disposing of Preferments, and Dispensing of Rewards and Punishments? that they might divide the Spoils of the Kingdom amongst themselves. Is not this like Satan's Offer of *the Kingdoms of the Earth and the Glories of them*, which he pretended to be his, and to give them to those that would serve him? And would not the Dissenters have all those Advantages to be given only to those that serve their Ends? And therefore lament in the next Words their hard Fortune, when they consider their being depriv'd of them, complaining of their being *laid up in Chains and Fetters for no Crimes*, but their Disobedience, Schism, and Separation, which for the bad Influence they have upon the Publick, are far greater Crimes than Men's private Immoralities; and yet they would have those Chains and Fetters remov'd, which they themselves styl'd *Golden Chains and soft Fetters*, when put upon those that refus'd the Covenant. And is it not gross Partiality and Ingratitude to make such Outcries of Bondage, when they enjoy a Liberty, which neither they themselves, nor any other establish'd Church would grant in their Circumstances? And here they aggravate their Punishment to extenuate their Crime, & complain of an Incapacity of Serving their Country, which their own Obstinacy has brought upon them, and indeed the many Miseries which their Divisions

vifions have brought upon the Country, & the many more that may be fear'd from them, abundantly juftifies the Government, & plainly fhew them unfit to be employ'd in it.

Laftly, the Difsenters tell us, *they do not defire any Perfons of different Perfwaſions from their Own, ſhould be depriv'd of the natural Right of Educating their own Children according to their own Sentiments.*

This is level'd againſt the Law, forbidding Non-conformiſts to keep private Schools and Nurseries of Sedition, for inſtilling into Youth Principles oppoſite to the eſta-bliſh'd Church and State; which Law they would have remov'd and no longer remain in force, that they may have the liberty of infuſing and ſpreading their poiſonous Principles, not only to Diſturb the preſent Age, but to Propagate the Schiſm to Poſterity. But may not the Government take care of the Education of thoſe, upon whom the Welfare of the Preſent and Future Generations depend, to ſee that they be bred up in ſound Principles of Religion, agreeable to the Laws and Conſtitution of the Country? Do not all wiſe Nations take care of this? and did not they themſelves do this in eſta-bliſhing their Covenant? ſo that theſe Men are ſelf-condemn'd in this and moſt other Objections, and act herein againſt their own Practiſes.

Thus I have conſider'd all that is Material in this and the other Pamphlets, there remain yet two Letters annex to them, which ſhall be conſider'd in my next. In the mean time I am, Sir,

Your humble Serv. A. B.

Fifth Letter.

SIR,

HAVING finiſh'd the Animadverſions upon the foregoing Pamphlets; I ſhall in this Conſider the two Letters annex to them: The One directed to the *Author of the Occaſional Paper*, annex to the firſt; the Other from *A Diſſenter to a Member of Parliament*, added to the laſt. Both which containing little more than what hath been already ſpoken to, will be the ſooner Diſpatcht. For the firſt, the Pamphleter

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is at a stand about the *Author of the Occasional Paper*, and cannot tell well what to make of him.

In the Beginning he *thanks* him for the Monthly Entertainment of his Papers, as one desirous of and delighting in them: but soon after blames him for being mealy Mouth'd, and falls upon him with a more than ordinary Severity or Scurrility rather, for not speaking out more plainly upon some things he hints at.

Which makes him doubt who or what he is, not being able to discover whether he be a Dissenter or a Low-Church-man. However his Letter like a two edged Sword cuts both ways, and smites him on either Side. *If he be a Dissenter* (saith he) *he is a sneaking one*, for speaking of them as he hath done. *If he be one of the Low-Church Party*, he need not be either asham'd or afraid to appear a down right Advocate for those, who have maintain'd a steady Regard to their Interest under the greatest Discouragements. So that he gores him with both the Horns of his Dilemma.

But what is it that thus galls and offends him? why, 'tis for not drawing the Consequences from many things which he had advanc'd; tho' they could not well be avoided, and would be supported by none but Dissenters. What these Consequences are he doth not tell us, but to be sure they are such as tend to the Strengthening and Supporting the Dissenting Cause, in favour of which he would have him speak and write more plainly, to bear up a sinking Cause, which he says is like to be supported by none, but those that are already too much under water. For though the free Thinkers, whom he calls *Men of no Religion*, may in some things fall in with the free Speakers, who are of a very bad one, and talk in the same Strain to propagate their particular Opinions; yet he will venture to say to the *Author of the Occasional Paper*, that none will so thorowly and heartily close with him in those large and generous Sentiments, of which he seems to have a Fondness, as the leading Party of the Dissenters would do, and therefore would have him take heart, and prove himself to be the Unprejudic'd and Disinterested Man he pretends to be, daring to be Just and Grateful to a Body of Men, who have done more
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for the good of their Country perhaps, than any set of People ever did under such Treatment as they have met with.

Sure, these Men live by bad Neighbours, who are forc'd to trumpet out their own Praise, which had they any Modesty, or were there any Truth in it, they might well enough leave to others, out of whose Mouth it would better come; and not talk so much of the *great Good they have done to their Country*. Which no body knows of but themselves; tho' the great Evil they have done is known and felt every where, of which few or none can be Ignorant or Insensible.

And here from the bad Treatment (he saith) they have met with, he takes Occasion to run into a long and sad Story of their many and great Sufferings, as their being *turn'd out of their Places when they could turn to nothing else for a Lively-hood; their being driven out of the Universities, and depriv'd of all the Advantages of Learning, and despis'd for lack of it*. Where they would lay the Charge of their own Folly upon others, which they should wholly take to themselves.

I remember a Dissenting Teacher, and with whom I had once to do, was wont to make frequent and bitter Complaints of this Kind, reckoning up among other things the Rifling of his Study, and taking away his Books from him, by which means he was forc'd (as he declar'd) to write and speak without book; which all that read or heard his Performances found Reason enough to believe.

However, this Letter-writer speaks up boldly for them under all the hard Treatment they have met with, that many of them by *their Industry are as Considerable as those that have had their Education at Oxford or Cambridge*; for which they have none but their own Party to be their Vouchers.

After this he returns again to the enumerating and aggravating their great Sufferings, the common Theme and Topick of Dissenters; though none, that ever liv'd in opposition to an establish'd Government and dissented from the known Laws of any Church or Country, ever found so much Favour or suffer'd less than they, who when in Power themselves inflicted far greater Sufferings on those

that dissented from them; and would never give half the Liberty to others, which they now enjoy. And yet instead of being thankful and contented, return nothing but Murmurings and Ingratitude,

But after all these loud Outcries for the easy and just Punishment of the Breach of good Laws, they have forgotten the ill Treatment and unjust Sufferings, inflicted on the faithful Adherents to the King and Church in the days of the great Rebellion, and that not for Breaking, but Observing of good Laws. What barbarous Cruelty and Inhumanity was offer'd to their Persons? what Rapine, Plunder, and Oppression, was us'd to their Goods? and the like. Sufferings to which those of the Dissenters bear a less Proportion, than the Scratch of a Pin to the Tortures of a Rack. And these too inflicted on them by Persons of the same Principles and Persuasion with our Dissenters, which may for ever silence all the idle Talk of their good Services, and the vain Boasts of the Merits of their Sufferings.

But what they want of Sincerity and Truth, they seek to supply by Subtlety and Pretence; frequently boasting of their great Loyalty, which is but of a very late Date, and crying up the Integrity of Dissenters, which few can find Faith or Reason enough to believe.

Now to cure this Backwardness of Belief, this Letter-writer would have the Author of the Occasional Paper to open the Eyes of the World, & to make them more sensible of the Sufferings and Merits of Dissenters; and to that End prescribes to him what to say to Men in Power in their Behalf; willing him to alledge *what great Service they have done for the Nation, and what farther need it hath of them, to mind them of the many publick Speeches they have made to direct their Conduct, and what they may reasonably expect and demand from them as a Reward of their Services and Sufferings.*

Moreover, he would have him to let them know, how much their *own Credit and Interest depend upon what they now do for them*, and that they are concern'd in honour to be as generous in taking Care of their Friends now, as the Tories were of their Adherents, with much more of such frivolous and fulsom Trumpery, which is too absurd

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to need or deserve any Reply, the bare repeating of it being enough to refute it.

But that which he takes to be the greatest Rubb in his way, and may put by all this, is, that *it is not yet a time to shew any Favour to Dissenters*, that the Motion is Unseasonable, and unless they take the true Time and the due Measures, they may lose Ground, and their Designs instead of going forward may be set backward. This he takes to be a mere Put off, which he ascribes, not to want of Ability, having all the Power in their own hands, but to want of Will in those, who shew little or no Inclination to help them. If they say, they are not yet able to do any thing for them, he would gladly know, when they propose to be better able; fearing the longed for time will never come. To put off the doing a thing to another time, when it may be done presently, is the Guise of those who never mean to do it at all; like Felix's putting off the hearing of St Paul to a more convenient Season, when he never meant to hear him more. Delays (he thinks) may render Men more unable and unwilling to perform what might be justly expected from them: and if they suspect their Weakness and Inability now to answer the Desires of those, who are ready to stand by them, what can they expect, when their Neglects have lessened their Number, and lost the Heads, Hearts, and Hands of a considerable Body of Men, who are now willing to strengthen and support their Interest.

These things he would have the Author of the Occasional Paper to insist and enlarge upon in their behalf; which shews the great Industry and Pains that some Men are at to Continue & Uphold a Faction; and may serve to quicken our Diligence to Oppose the Growth, and Obstruct the Prevalence and Propagation of it. And in a word to be as zealously affected in a good Cause as they are in a Bad, which will be attended with more Comfort here, and bring us a far greater Reward hereafter.

This is all that needs to be observ'd and return'd in answer to the first Letter. I am, Sir,

Yours A. B.

SIR,

Sixth Letter.

THE Second Letter is from a Dissenter to a Member of Parliament, wherein, after many thanks for Kindnesses done to him and his Friends that voted for him, he blames the Member for not performing the Promise then made to them, nor taking one Step as far as he can understand towards the making of it good.

Now this Promise, as appears by what follows, was to use his Interest in Parliament to ease the Dissenters the same Way as King James labour'd to ease the Papists, to wit, by the taking away the Penal Laws and Test, which stand in the way of both, and therefore Both join in their Endeavours of Removing it. And this is what he thought might be expected from that worthy Member, which he presses upon him with all manner of Vehemence and Application, putting him in mind of his accepting a Commission of the Peace at his entreaty, merely upon that View, that he *took upon him that Office with some Reluctance, because it debarr'd him of the Liberty of frequenting those Meetings, wherein he thought he serv'd God most acceptably, and to be depriv'd of that Way of Worship was a great Uneasiness to him.*

But may not this Uneasiness proceed rather from Humour or mistaken Opinion, than from any sound Principles of Knowledge or Conscience? and owe its Rise more to a Desire of Preserving and Promoting a Party, than any good Design of Advancing God's Glory? This should be well look'd into and examin'd; for 'tis no new thing to *take Darkness for Light and Light for Darkness*, that is, Error for Truth and Truth for Error; yea *to love Darkness rather than Light*, and to be more fond of a Darling and beloved Error, than of more necessary and weighty Truths. This often comes to pass through the Subtlety of Satan and Policy of the World: who so blind the eyes of Many, that they cannot discern Truth from Falshood, and so confound and take one for the other.

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So that this Dissenter's more acceptable Way of serving God may perhaps be found to be only more acceptable in his own and not in God's Eyes; the Prayer, that he thinks him Delighted with, may be but an Abomination to him; and that Incense may stink in his Nostrils, which he apprehends to ascend with a sweet smelling Savour. This is a dangerous Mistake and ought to be well considered.

And particularly whether God, who is better pleas'd with a few hearty than many and new Words in Prayer, be not more Delighted with a well weighed and compos'd Devotion, than with sudden crude and extempore Effusions? As also whether he, who hath styl'd himself *a God of Order and not of Confusion* and requires *Decency and Order* in his Worship, would have it stript of all Form and Comeliness; and when he calls for the Beauty, to be serv'd in the Deformity of Holiness? These things are worthy of the Enquiry of all serious and well meaning Christians: and I think upon the whole, they will find little Reason to leave the Regular Devotion of the establish'd Church to fall into the Irreverent and Disorderly Way of the Dissenters.

And yet this Dissenting Gentleman is very angry with the Government for not Removing these comely Ornaments and Appendages of Divine Worship, and if he be not eas'd otherwise, he is resolv'd to ease himself by quitting his Place; for *he is weary* (he says) *of his Post, and unless he can act in it with more freedom, he is resolv'd to go to a Meeting, and to get some to inform against him, to get rid of a troublesome Office, and be more at liberty to serve God in his own Way, and he knows others of the same Mind.*

Where he seems to threaten the Government with the loss of his Service, if it do's not what he would have it; as if he were the main Prop or Pillar of the Publick Welfare, which must stand or fall according as he is employ'd or laid aside; which is like *Æsop's Fly* sitting upon the Cart-wheel, and saying, *what a Dust do I raise*, ascribing that to its self in which it had no hand. In like manner, there are some vain Persons, who think it is they that carry all things that move upon other and greater Wheels, and that a Nation is undone, if they are disgusted and put not an helping

helping hand to support it. But such may either lay themselves aside, or be laid aside by others, without any great Damage or Danger to the Publick.

But to make themselves considerable, he minds us in the next Paragraph of the great Interests of Dissenters in the Elections of Members of Parliament, that they can turn the Scale in the greatest Part of the whole Kingdom. And then asks the Question, whether such a considerable Number of Men should *be slighted*? How true his Computation is, I shall not at present examine, but only mind him, that his Reckoning without his Host will require him to reckon again, and then 'tis to be fear'd his Reckoning will fall much short, and when they are weigh'd in the Ballance, they will be found wanting.

However *he will speak his Mind freely, and tell us, that unless those Laws, that are in force against them, are Repeal'd before the Dissolution of this Parliament, he is resolv'd not to stir one foot in the Election of another, and several of his Friends, with whom he hath talk'd about it, are of the same Mind.* This is good News, if it prove true; for their stirring so much from home hath occasion'd all the Stirs abroad in those matters, and if they will sit still, as in their Circumstances best becomes them, all things will goe with greater Peace and Quietness, and much more Advantage to the Publick.

This he takes to be *a desperate Remedy, but being the only one they have left, he assures us, if things be not done to their Minds, they will have recourse to it.*

This is well Resolv'd, and if they will stand firm to it, they will find greater Ease themselves, and do much better Service to their Country.

But he will not yet wholly Despair, since a Member of Parliament hath told him, that *the Whigs would be oblig'd by Interest, Gratitude, and Ingenuity, to ease the Dissenters of those hardships that were brought upon them by the Tories, and that he himself would bring in a Bill for their Relief as soon as possible.*

Yet still he is full of Fears; that all this is forgotten, since nothing hath been done for them all this while. And tho' the Member of Parliament labours to satisfie them, by
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alleging *Multitude of Business, the Troubles of the Times,* and the like; yet these are all look'd upon as slight Excuses, that may be made use of at any time, and serve only to deceive them by Delays. The *Tories* (saith he) *could carry on the Test Act in less than a Weeks Time; but the Whigs can't take it off in an Age.* Thus we see how eager and restless these Men are in the Pursuit of their Designs, and what they cannot obtain by Argument or Entreaty, they endeavour to extort by Importunity, hoping that as the unjust Judge was prevail'd upon to grant the earnest Suit of a poor Widow merely to be rid of the Trouble of her Importunity; so the Government may be persuaded to relieve them, if it be but to relieve themselves from the continual Clamour of their Complaints and Petitions.

But this Author, with the rest of his Brethren, cannot conclude without a Fling to the *Sacramental Test*, which they cannot attempt to take off (saith he) but the *High Church-men* presently bellow out, *O the Church, the Church, &c.* And well they may when they are pulling down her Walls and Bulworks to lay her open to the Incurfions of all her Enemies.

'Tis Storied of One that was dumb from his Mother's Womb, and could not by any Art be brought to Speech, who yet upon seeing one about to kill his Father, suddenly brake forth and cried, *O my Father!* His deep Concern for his Father's Life loosen'd his Tongue, and made him speak upon that great Occasion; in like manner an hearty Zeal for the Peace and Prosperity of the Church will make us deeply affected for any Imminent Evil that threatens or betides it. And to seek to remove good Laws made to guard and defend it, can be only the Desire and Design of such as bear an evil Will at Sion.

These are the humble Requests or Demands rather of our modest Dissenters, who beg a little to grasp at all; Rising from Liberty to Dominion, from Toleration to Establishment, and shews how apt they are, if the Government give them an Inch to take an Ell, which our Governours no doubt are wise enough to discover and prevent. I shall shut up all with a wise Observation of a late judicious Writer, that since in the Civil State good Laws are pro-

vided to restrain Sturdy Beggars; 'tis to be hop'd, that in the Ecclesiastical State Sturdy Beggars will not be permitted to Controul the Laws. I am, Sir,

Your humble Serv. A. B.

Seventh Letter.

SIR,

SINCE my Last to you, there are come to my hands two or three Letters more, containing the Correspondence held between the Dissenting Teachers in London, and their Dissenting Brethren in the Country for the upholding and promoting their Schism; which Letters unraveling the secret Intregues and Designs of the Party, now carrying on and preparing for the next Meeting of the Parliament, I shall give you some Account of them in their own Words, with some short Remarks on each Paragraph.

The first Letter is from one John Lucas in London to John Michel of Evesham in Worcestershire, which begins thus: Reverend Sir,

As you stand at the Head of that Flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseer, and as the Lord Jesus hath given to his Churches the Spirit of Discerning: so doubtless you cannot but make this Observation, that not one Protestant Dissenter of what Denomination soever in Great Britain has made the least Opposition against the Illustrious House of Hanover; and therefore 'tis pity, those should not be put into a Capacity equal with other Protestants to stand up in the Vindication and Support of that Government, for which they have so readily ventur'd their All, to procure and establish.

Where we have another Instance of the Dissenters vain and empty Boasting of the great and meritorious Services done by them for the King and Country; which consist more of Negatives, of the Evils not done, then of any Good done by them; and so resembles that Vaunt of the Pharisee, *God, I thank thee, I am not as bad as other Men,* or as this Publican, when at the same time he neglected *the weightiest Matters of the Law.* And here this Letter-writer,

writer with great Solemnity ushers in this wise Observation, that *none of the Dissenters made any Opposition to the Illustrious House of Hanover*. When he might have observ'd as well, that none of them did it any Service, but rather disserve'd and disturb'd it by their unreasonable and unseasonable Divisions.

The Truth of that matter is; the Settling the Crown in that Illustrious Branch of the Royal Family was a National Act, consented to and confirm'd by both Houses of Parliament, in which was included the Consent of all the Subjects of Great Britain; wherein the Dissenters had no greater hand then the worst and meanest of all the People, and their Not opposing it is, what they had neither Power, nor Interest, nor Pretence to induce or move them thereunto. And yet these vain Boasters would fain ascribe this great Transaction to themselves, as if they were the main Props and Pillars of the Kingdom, and the Government of it must necessarily fall to the Ground, if the managing of Affairs come not into their Hands; making their Not opposing it to be *the procuring and establishing of it*. And therefore they deserve a share in the greatest Places of Profit and Trust for its *Vindication and Support*, especially having (as he saith) *ventur'd their All for its Establishment*; which things are so absurd, false, and ridiculous, that 'tis to be wonder'd at, how they can have the face to utter or pretend to them; and indeed 'tis fit they should be rewarded according to what they have ventur'd, that is, with Nothing. But he go's on; Sir,

These things being premis'd, I must next acquaint you, I am employ'd by some worthy Senators, to contrive such Methods for preparing a Bill, which they will assist to bring in the first of the next Session, which if God (whose Cause it is) will please to succeed, will unshackle the hands of all the Protestant Dissenters in Great Britain.

Now here 'tis much to be suspected, that he feigns or abuses some worthy Senators, in pretending a Commission from them to prepare their Schismatical Projects for their propounding or promoting in the next Session. 'Tis not easy to believe, that any worthy Senators should employ him in any such Work, or put him upon any such unwor-

thy Task; or if there were such, I think they would give him little Thanks, and less Assistance, for discovering them as engag'd in any such Designs.

But to render their Projects the more plausible, and the more effectual, they style them (*the Cause of God*) the usual Stratagem and Pretence of all Impostors and Seducers, who are wont to engage Heaven in all their Delusions, and to draw in God to their Side, to gain them the greater Credit and the better Success. The Rebels and Regicides in Forty one call'd all their wicked and Seditious Enterprizes against the King and Church, by the Name of *The Cause of God, the Cause of Religion, and the Good old Cause*, as some of their Favourers and Followers have done since, which is a great Affront and Indignity offer'd to the Divine Majesty, to make him the Author or approver of their mischievous Machinations, & to father upon him the fond and fallacious Productions of their own Brain, which hath often provok'd him to blast and infatuate their Counsels, and bring them to none Effect.

But to encourage them in these vile Attempts and Practices, he tells them, *the blessed Event of them will be the Unshackling the hands of all the Protestant Dissenters in Great Britain*. Where by *unshackling their hands*, he means the Repealing of the Laws made for the good Order and Uniformity of the Church, which he here calls by the name of *Shackles*, and elsewhere of Chains and Fetters; which he would have taken off from the hands of Dissenters, that they may be no longer held to the Obedience or Observance of them, but left to worship God when and how they please. A strange Request, to be made to worthy Senators and Law-makers, to Undoe what they have with great Deliberation and good reason Done; to let all Men loose from the Obligation to pious and wholesome Injunctions, and to let in all manner of Disorder and Confusion into the Church of Christ. And yet This is what the Ambition and blind Zeal of these Men makes them not ashamed to Ask and Hope for; and therefore may be justly answer'd, not only with a Repulse, but a sharp Rebuke, for such Insolence.

In the next Paragraph, he imposes or rather desires a
Task

Task of his Correspondent in these following words: *What Burden I lay upon you now at this present is only this, viz. that you will as soon as possible enquire, and send me an Account of all the Meetings in your County; and that you may not miss of answering the publick End, be pleas'd to insert the Names under the Description of these three Ps, viz. Place, Pastor, Principle. I shall not trouble you with the Quakers, being inform'd of them all at once from their general Register in London. This being done, of which I doubt not your Readiness, I hope we and all our Posterity at last may have Cause to rejoice for the blessed Event thereof.*

Here their Politick Scheme leads them to the Numbring of the Party, and Ranking them under several Heads, the better to know their Strength, and how to make use of them as Occasion shall require. A Sin much like that of David, who commanded Joab to go and number the People, to gain the greater Advantage upon his Enemies; but the thing displeased God, as a trusting too much to the Arm of Flesh, and relying more on the Number and Valour of his Men, then upon the Power and Favour of his Maker; for which God punish'd him, first with great Trouble and Anguish of Mind, for *David's heart smote him after he had numbred the People*, and after with a Raging Pestilence, which destroy'd many thousands of the People, and greatly lessen'd the Number upon which he so much depended. And what other aim can these Men have in Numbring their Party, than to hope by their Numbers (of which we find them often boasting) to overawe or overballance the Government, and thereby either to incline or constrain it to a Compliance with them upon their own terms, which may justly move both God and the King, not only to frustrate their Hopes, but to chastise their Insolence.

In the Close of this Letter, the Writer tells his Correspondent, that *the next time he hears from him, will be to desire the hands of all the Protestant Dissenters in the County to an Address that shall be sent to them*, which he makes no doubt, but will be as readily Granted as Ask'd. Of all which he desires the utmost Secrecy, lest by being made Publick, they should miscarry before they come to the Birth. What the Subject or Heads of this Address are, must be left

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to time to discover ; at present they are only preparing, and promis'd to be sent, with the Hopes of being readily receiv'd and sign'd.

The only Remark here is, to note the unwearied Diligence of the Party to prosecute and promote their pernicious Purposes. How busy the Heads of them are in Contriving, and how tame and obsequious the Inferiours are in Complying with and Executing their Projects? which should open the Eyes of Superiours to observe and obviate their evil Designs, especially since they are studiously carried on in the Dark, and do great Mischief without being seen. And here the Letter concludes, *with due Christian Respect, yours sincerely in the sacred Bonds of the Gospel,*

John Lucas.

This Letter was either by Mis-information, or some other Mistake, or Design in the Writer, directed to Mr Michel the Church-Minister at Evesham, instead of Mr Higgs the Conventicle-teacher in that Town, for whom, it may be reasonably suppos'd, it was principally intended.

However, upon the Receipt thereof Mr Michel communicated the Contents of it to some of his Reverend Brethren in the Neighbourhood, to advise and consider what Measures to take about it; and in the mean time return'd an Answer to the Correspondent in London in his own way, to get into the Secrets of the Party, and to learn as much as might be, what they were about; as particularly to know the Heads of the Address that was preparing, and the Substance of the Bill intended to be brought into the House, with other things that may be of Use for the Service of the Publick.

In the Reply to this Answer, which came soon after, directed as before, he in his Canting Way approves of what Mr Michel had done and written, promising shortly to send the Address down to him. And for the Bill, the Intent of that (he says) is, *to set aside the Schism Act, to promote Academick Learning, and to make Dissenters capable of such Places, as his Majesty shall deem meet to intrust them with.*

The Schism Act against private Schools and Seminaries of Sedition lies mightily in their Way, which makes them earnestly press for the Repeal of it; they know that without

out them the Schism must die with them, and the Conventicle fall through the Ignorance of those, that should support it. And therefore they struggle hard for some Private Ways of Education, to instil those Schismatical Principles, that are necessary for its Defence and Propagation. They are sensible that the two famous Universities breed up Youth in Principles of Obedience and Conformity to the establish'd Church, which without some other Methods would settle all in Peace and Unity, and so put an End to all their separate Meetings; and therefore they must bring up Some to sow the Seeds of Discord and Division, which are the sole Props and Support of the Dissenting Cause.

Indeed, the great Enemy of Mankind is busy in planting these *Tares* among us, to hinder the Growth of sound Doctrine; and his Emissaries are hard at work in *building this Hay and Stubble upon the Foundation of Christianity*, which without a due Care they hope may in time overtop and extirpate it. This the Wisdom of our Governours cannot but see, and no doubt their Piety and Zeal will prompt them to prevent.

But how shall we excuse those from Perjury, who take upon them to teach Academick Learning in private Schools, which they have sworn not to read or instruct any in out of the Universities? But Interest and Pride will make these Men strain hard to render themselves capable of Places of Profit and Trust, of which they are more than ordinarily Ambitious: insomuch that, if the Door leading to Power and Preferment opens not to them of its own Accord, they will venture, either to break it open, or to scale the Walls, yea and to undermine the Foundation too, rather than want Access to it.

But 'twill better become this Godly Party to subdue this Pride, and to learn the Lessons of Humility and self-denial; which will sooner advance them to Honour and Power too, than vainly to court them, or to exalt themselves.

The Letter closes with this Promise. *A fuller Account you may expect in the next*; of which you shall hear more, when it comes to hand. In the mean time I am, Sir,

Your humble Serv. A. B.

SIR, Eighth Letter.

ALL the foregoing Pamphlets driving at a Comprehension; 'twill be requisite to add something touching the Nature, End, and Consequents of that Evil.

For the first, Comprehension is a new Word coin'd for the Sake and Relief of Dissenters, and signifies the receiving of such as Members of the Church, without the Qualifications necessary to their Admission, and the Conditions requisite to their Continuance in it.

Now the main Qualification necessary to Admission or Initiation into the Church, is a regular Baptism receiv'd from the hands of Persons duly Call'd and Authoriz'd to Administer it.

The Conditions requir'd to the Continuance in it, are Confirmation, Submission to its Authority, and Observance of the Rules enjoin'd for the Decency and Order of its Worship and Communion. Now the Taking any into the Church, and Intitling them to the Rights and Priviledges of it without these Conditions and Qualifications annex'to it, is what is generally call'd by the Name of Comprehension; a new Device to Legitimate Schism, and Establish Iniquity by a Law.

But for the better clearing of this matter, we must note, that the Persons duly Call'd and Authoriz'd to Administer these things were by Christ's own Appointment; first the Apostles, whom he Commission'd to *Go, and Teach all Nations, Baptizing* and making Disciples every where. After which by a Commission from Christ they likewise were Empower'd to *Send others, as the Father had sent him, and as he had sent them*. By Vertue of which Commission, they Sent and Ordain'd Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, as their Successors in those Offices: and these are the Persons, who, by the Apostolical Rules and Canons, and the continu'd Practice of the Church down to our times, are Authoriz'd to admit into, or shut out of the Church. So that they who receive Baptism or Ordination by the hands of

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of Such, as by a regular Succession are Impower'd by them to do it, are duly admitted into the Church, and to all the Priviledges of Church-membership. For these *Come in by the Door into the Sheep-fold, and are the true Shepherds of the Sheep or Flock of Christ.* But they, who climb up or come in any other way by unqualified or unauthoriz'd Persons, are *Thieves and Robbers*, who steal away the Sheep from their lawful Pastors, and seduce them into Barns, Halls, or Ware-houses, to *make Merchandize of unstable Souls.* Of this kind are those who style themselves by the Name of Dissenters, a Name that denotes, not only the Aversness of their Minds to the Principles and good Orders of the Church, but the Perversness of their Practices in Opposition to them.

And yet these are the Persons that call so loudly for a Comprehension, that is, for Admission into that Church from which they own themselves to be Dissenters, which is to join Light and Darkness, Christ and Belial in one Fellowship and Communion, 'tis to reconcile Contradictions, and to make Fire and Water mix and consist together.

But beside the Inconsistence, the Injustice and Unreasonableness of such Clamours will plainly appear, if we consider, that no form'd Society in the World will receive any as Members of it without Subscriptions and Oaths of Fidelity, nor admit them to the Privildges without performing the Duties and Conditions appertaining to it. And can any think it fit, that so sacred and regular a Society, as that of the Church, should receive any upon other easier Terms? or take those into its Communion, who refuse the Conditions, and reject all Obligations to obey the establish'd Rules of it? None sure, that understand or wish well to the Peace and good Government of any Society, can think fit to gratifie or comply with such unreasonable Demands. And yet this is what our craving Dissenters so loudly and earnestly solicit for, and what they cannot gain by Reason, hope to extort by Clamour. But to yield to such Importunity, is no better than (as one wittily expresses it) to Let in a Thief into the House to be rid of the Noise and Trouble of his rapping at the Door.

But to render their Cry for Comprehension the more ef-

fectual, they stile it, the setting the Church-door more wide and open for the better Reception of Members, and enlarging the Way to Heaven for the benefit of the more Passengers. To this I shall reply in the Words of a Reverend Father, who grants it indeed fit, that the Church-door should always stand open: but 'tis to receive Friends, and such as shall be fit to enter. But it would be a dangerous thing, to set any Door so wide open, as to let in an Enemy upon them, who may be able to do much more Mischief within the Doors, than they can without; and there are some, who, if they cannot openly enter, will creep or wriggle in some by way for that Purpose. And this is the more to be fear'd and watch'd against at present, from what we learn from a Dissenter, who in a late Letter to his Friend writes thus: *If once we get in, never fear but we shall have Power and Interest enough in Church and State to make what farther Alterations we please, and to bring things nearer to our own Model.*

This is a fair warning of what they aim at, and what we may expect from such meek and humble Petitioners. And if after this we suffer our selves to be cajol'd and undermin'd by such designing profess'd Enemies, we can only blame our own Folly, and confess our Ruin to come from our selves. *To grant (as one hath well observ'd) is to give Ground, and some Persons ask some things, in order to their getting others without asking.* No Encroacher (saith he) asks all at first, even Sedition it self is modest in the beginning, but gains Points by degrees, and by insensible steps works its self into Power and Preeminence to the working out others. He that can get in his Head, will soon get in his whole Body: and great Evils have risen from small Beginnings. Our Dissenters at first desir'd only a little Conivance or Toleration, which being obtain'd, they soon crav'd for more and greater Liberty, and now will scarce be satisfied without Empire and Command. Every Concession encourag'd them to farther Petitions, and their Boldness still encreasing grew into higher and greater Demands; now they seek to be receiv'd into the Church upon their own Terms, and bringing with them the same Enmity to and Designs against it. They would fain be upon the same

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Level with the other Members, that they may in time overtop them; and would stand upon the same Foot, the better to tread them down. Thus they, who not long since pray'd to be indulged as weak Brethren, are by Liberty and Connivance grown almost too strong for their Masters. So that the Welfare or Ruin of the Church depend upon the Opening or Shutting of the Church-door, and the Letting in or out of fit and proper Persons to be intrusted with such sacred and important matters. That we mistake not Enemies for Friends, nor let in such into the Church, whose Principles and Practices tend to subvert or overthrow it.

This will lead me farther to consider the Metaphor of the Church-gate, which our Saviour calls a *Strait Gate*, and the *Way to Life a narrow Way*, and *few there be that find it*: whereas the *Wide Gate and broad Way leadeth to Destruction*, and *many there be that go in*, and walk on in it to their endless Perdition. Which made our Saviour in the next verse caution his Disciples, to *beware of false Prophets or Teachers*, who would make the Gate of Heaven wider, and the Way to Life broader, than he had made them; and to that end, *would come in Sheep's Cloathing*, that is, with Pretences smooth and soft as Wool, to draw the straying Sheep into their Fold: *but inwardly they are ravenous Wolves*, who seek to make a Prey of them, and divide the Flock on purpose to devour them. By which we see who they are, and how to be kearken'd to, who call for widening the Gates of the Church by principles of Latitude and Lukewarmness, and enlarging the Way to Heaven by Comprehension and Toleration.

Moreover, *Jerusalem* which in Scripture is set to signify the whole Church, is describ'd to be a *City compact together, and at unity within it self*, which it cannot long be, if it let in the *Troublers of Israel*.

Again, it is said to be a *City that hath Walls and Bulwarks*, to defend the Good, and exclude the bad Members of it; and how can that be, if it be left free to all Comers and Goers, and made Common to those that *wish well*, and those that *bear an evil Will at Sion*? There can be no more ready and certain Way to undermine or destroy a Church, than by weakening the Foundation on which it stands,

and laying it open to the Insults and Assaults of its greatest Adversaries.

We read of One, who coming to a little City that had a great Gate, merrily warn'd the Citizens, to take heed lest their City run out at the Gate; in like manner, it may be said to those, that would have the Church-door so wide open as to let in Sects and Dissenters, to take heed lest the Church goe out at the Door. For where so many Religions are, it may be justly fear'd, that in a little time there will be none at all: and it hath been wisely enough observ'd, that if we are not settled upon the same Foundation, and built up in the same Doctrine and Discipline, it will avail but little to be found within the same Walls.

And as this Device is repugnant to all sound Reason, so is it directly contrary to the whole Current of Antiquity, and the Practice of all settled Churches.

The Primitive Fathers would receive no Hereticks or Schismatics into the Church, 'till they had openly and thoroughly renounced both their Heresies & Schisms, and heartily return'd (as far as they could discern) to the Faith and Communion of the Church; and all succeeding Ages have trod in their Steps, and with good Reason and Authority have done the same.

And 'twill be our Wisdom and Safety to follow their good Examples herein, lest through Negligence or Mistake we take in those Vipers into the Bosom of the Church, whose Property it is to eat through the Bowels of their Mother.

And yet this is what our unreasonable Dissenters Importunately sue for, and vainly expect from the present Government.

But let us enquire a little into what is pretended and propos'd as a Reason for the complying with this Device.

And here first, some alledge the Smallness or Littleness of the things in Difference between us, to wit, only a few Rites and Ceremonies, things confess'd to be indifferent, and no way essential to Religion or the Worship of God; and since we agree in the Main Fundamental Matters of Religion, it seems inconsistent with Reason and Christianity to insist upon and exclude Christians out of the Church
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for things of little or no Moment. This is what is commonly urg'd by the best Friends and Favourers of the Dissenters.

In answer whereunto, it is worth observing, that the Smallness or Littleness of the things enjoin'd by Authority is so far from Excusing, that it rather Aggravates the Sin of Disobeying them; for the Less the things commanded are, the more Easy they are to be observ'd; and the neglect of them the more Inexcusable. They that will Disobey in a little thing will sooner do it in a greater; and the Reverence of Authority is too tender a thing to be slighted or overrul'd in either. For that moves the Question, who shall yield? whether Governours shall submit to Dissenters, or Dissenters to Governours; which with good Subjects would never come into Question. For how little soever the things requir'd are, Obedience to Government is no *little thing*; and nothing but great and weighty matters indeed can warrant any withstanding of it.

Now these *Little things*, as they style them, being undoubtedly within the Magistrate's Power to command, and having the Stamp of his Authority upon them, they are no more to be accounted *Little things*, but become too *Great* to be disobey'd without Dishonour to the Laws, and Detriment to the Publick.

Adam's eating an Apple, or the forbidden Fruit, was (one would think) a very *Little thing*, and scarce worth any Regard: But the Disobedience, the Ingratitude, the Stubbornness and Contempt implied in it, enhanced the Guilt, and render'd it a crying Enormity justly deserving the great Punishment inflicted on it. And that which turn'd our first Parents out of Paradise may well enough keep refractory Persons out of the Church.

I have insisted the more on this, to silence, if possible, this Popular Plea, and to shew the Weakness of this plausible Objection.

Secondly, some would have Dissenters taken into the Church, to quiet the Minds, and stop the Mouths of such clamorous Complainants, to free our selves from the Noise of their restless Importunity, as the unjust Judge granted the Request of the importunate Widow, because *by her continual*

tinual Coming she wearied him, or as they still the Crying of Children by humouring and complying with them.

But I think, the Cries and Clamours of both are better still'd by the Rod, than by any such Compliances, which rather embolden than oblige them; and both of them may be sooner whipt than reason'd into Obedience and good Manners. Besides, no Laws how wise or wholsom soever shall be able to retain their Force, if they must be yielded up to the Petulance of such Petitioners, or laid aside when any number of Men shall have Boldness or Impudence enough to oppose and exclaim against them.

Again, Others think the Peace and Prosperity of the Church will be better preserv'd and promoted by Comprehending than Excluding them; which is as likely, as that an Enemy within the Doors will do less harm than one without; or that a Schism within the Church will prove less dangerous than one that is kept out. To take Comprehension for an Expedient of Peace and Unity, is to take Poison for Medicine; and Swords and Staves for Instruments of Peace and Concord.

They, who are acquainted with the Temper of Sectaries and Dissenters, cannot but know them to be stiff and peremptory, obstinate and incompassionate with all Laws made for good Order and Government in Church and State; which things are commonly accompanied with Pride, Censoriousness, Ambition, and surly Behaviour to all their Superiours in Parts, Place, Office, Learning, or otherwise. Nothing is more frequent with them than Censuring and Detracting from Persons, that are far above and better than themselves; and bitterly Inveighing against the Rules and Canons of the Church into which they seek to enter.

This is the known Temper and Demeanour of Dissenters; and to receive them into the Church without Amendment and Obligation to better manners, is to take so many Snakes into its Bosom, which have a venom in the tongue, and Adders poison under their lips.

But some are apt to think, that the Letting them into the Church may put an end to the Controversies, that are occasion'd by the Keeping them out. Whereas, Experience hath often shew'd us the quite contrary: Yielding
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and Concessions have ever encreas'd, but never satisfied their Desires. 'Tis but the adding more Fuel to the Fire, which never extinguishes, but always heightens the Flame. The feavourish Heats of such Men's Zeal prompt them to be still calling for more; and like Men in a Dropsy, the more is given them, the more they crave. Innovating Principles know no Bounds; and they, that are given to change, cannot tell where to stop; by mending one thing after another they marr all, and under a Pretence of Reforming, Ruin and destroy the whole Constitution.

This we have found done by wofull Experience, by Men of the same Principles, who once already in our own memory have destroy'd the Church under a Pretence of Reforming it, and laid aside its Worship and Discipline as Unlawful and Antichristian. And can any think it wise or safe to let in those into the Church, who have once already pull'd it down, without renouncing the Principles by which they did it? will not the same Causes have the same Effect, and lead them to act over the same thing? yea, may not their Desire and Design of Coming in be for that end; to play over the same Game? and must we not be very weak to be twice impos'd upon by the same Artifice?

Were they indeed Persons to be gain'd by Lenity and Forbearance, or oblig'd by Kindness and Condescension, were they ever known to make a good Use of Favours granted to them; there might be some Reason or Encouragement to shew Favour unto them. But there being no Instance of their growing better, and many of their becoming worse by all Grants and Indulgences, it can be no Act of Wisdom or Kindness to countenance or comply with such Petitioners; for that, instead of making them bend to the Laws, were to make the Laws bend to them, which is to gratifie their Pride, and to harden them in their Obstinacy, making them to ascribe all Favours more to their own Merits, than to the Mercy and Mildness of the Government, and Requiting them only by Requiring more, and gaining farther Points upon it: which may be a warning to beware of them.

Again, were there any need of these Dissenting Teachers to supply the Necessities of the Church; were the People
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like to perish for lack of Knowledge; or were any Sound or Orthodox Teachers driven into Corners, they might well enough be taken from thence into the Church, to employ their Abilities for the Use and Benefit of the People.

But this (thanks be to God) is none of our Case, we have regular Sons enough to feed the Flock of Christ with sound Doctrine, and goe before them with holy Examples. Neither is there any want of Persons able and willing to do so. And tho' 'tis possible that an unworthy Person may here or there creep in, as there was a Judas among the twelve Apostles; and our Saviour speaks of some, that sat in Moses Chair, who *said and did not*, yet his Advice in such cases was, to *do as they said, and not as they did*, without making any Rents or Schisms in the Church, which are greater and more pernicious Evils, than Men's private Immoralities.

Moreover, In this Device of Comprehension, 'twill be necessary to comprehend all Sects or none, for they having all the same Plea of Conscience, and the same Pretence for Liberty, it will be a plain Partiality to Receive one and Refuse another, having all the same Claim. To gratifie one Sect with the neglect of others, will exasperate the Rest, and inflame the Whole, and so instead of Reconciling and Mending matters, will Marr all and make them Worse. And to let in all Sects into the Church, would be to open the Floodgates of Impiety for a whole Deluge of Errors and Heresies to flow in and overrun it.

In short then, this new Device of Comprehension is attended with so many sad Effects and Consequents, that may very well beget an utter Dislike and Detestation of it; for it must unavoidably destroy the Peace, Order, and Unity of the Church, and open a Gap for all manner of Confusion and Contention to enter into it. Where there are diverse Sects and different Religions in the same Church, there will be endless Fews and Divisions. The Reverence and Harmony of Publick Worship will be lost, all Love and Concord destroy'd, and the Church turn'd into Babel or a Chaos of Confusion; for some (as one hath truly observ'd) will be for serving God in set prescrib'd Forms of Prayer, others with their extemporary Effusions; some in the

the same Place shall use the Surplice in Divine Service; others not, preferring the long Cloak or the short Tunick before it; some will baptize with the Sign of the Cross, and others without it; some will kneel at Prayers and the Communion, others will stand or sit at both; and each of them will have their several Parties and Factions, eagerly espousing and pleading their Cause; from whence nothing can be expected, but vain Janglings and perverse Disputings of Men of corrupt Minds: insomuch that in a little time the Face of an establish'd Church, and the Appearance of any sound Religion will scarce be seen or found among us. These and many more deplorable Evils and Mischiefs are like to be the unavoidable Consequents of this goodly Device; which may therefore make all wise and good Men to abominate and reject it.

There were in the Apostles days some Judaizing Christians, who contended as eagerly for Circumcision, as our Dissenters now do for Comprehension; and both by false Prophets and Teachers creeping into the Churches of Christ.

The former by urging Circumcision on the Gentile Converts would make them *Debtors to keep the whole Law of Moses*, and so *intangle them again in that Yoke of Bondage, from which Christ had made them free*. The latter by calling for Comprehension would lay aside all the Rules and Institutions of the Gospel, for the decent and orderly performance of Divine Worship, and so introduce all manner of Confusion and Disorder into the Christian Church.

Against the former St Paul set himself with a more than ordinary Zeal and Vigor, telling the Galatians, that *if they suffer'd themselves to be circumcis'd, Christ could profit them nothing*. When St Peter comply'd with the Jews too far in this matter, St Paul withstood him to the face, *because he was to be blamed*. And when false Brethren preach'd up Circumcision to hinder the Success and Propagation of the Gospel, the Apostle was so far from yielding to them for any time, that *he gave no place by subjection to them, no not for an hour, that the Truth of the Gospel might continue among them*.

From which Example we are taught strenuously to oppose those false Teachers, who seek by the Artifice of Com-

prehenſion to let in all Sects, Hereſies, and Diviſions upon us, and firmly to adhere to the Unity, Peace, and Harmony of the Church, as the beſt means to preſerve the Settlement and Conſtitution of it, and to continue ſound Doctrine and the Purity of the Goſpel among us.

Wherefore let us all keep cloſe to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Devotion of the eſtabliſh'd Church, and as far as we can, keep all Schiſm, Profaneneſs, and Diſſenſion out of it. I ſhall conclude with the Words of the Apoſtle: *Be ſtedfaſt, and immoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, and then your Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.* I am, Sir,

Your Affectionate Friend

and Servant A. B.

Ninth Letter.

SIR,

I Have receiv'd two Pamphlets more ſent me to peruſe, The one intituled, *A Vindication of Presbyterian Loyalty*, The other, *Of plain Dealing*. The former cries up the Loyalty of Diſſenters, with ſome farther Arguments for their private Schools and Academies. The Latter calls for Amendments and Alterations in the Liturgy or publick Prayers of the Church; both which will require and deſerve a few Animadverſions.

For the Firſt. The Advocates for Preſbytery are loth to lie any longer under the Reproach of Diſloyalty and Rebellion; and therefore think it time to ſtand forth and appear in their defence and vindication. And here, if good words and flattering Commendations may be taken for true marks and proofs of Loyalty, they might perhaps bid faireſt of all Men for the Character of good Subjects, for none abound more in ſuch Outward tokens and expreſſions of a Verbal Loyalty, than they. But if we examine farther into the Principles and Practices of theſe Men, and weigh them in the Ballance of the Sanctuary; we ſhall find them wanting of that true Real Loyalty, which they ſo often boaſt of and pretend to: yea, if we trace up that Sect to its Original,

nal, their pretended Loyalty will I fear be found of no longer date than the Revolution; for if we goe higher to the first Rise of Presbytery, which was from John Calvin in Geneva, Knox in Scotland, and the long Parliament in England, we shall find them a turbulent and *Rebellious People, hurtful unto Kings, and movers of Sedition every where*; what troubles, tumults and Commotions they have all along from time to time Occasioned, the Histories of those times and places may abundantly inform us.

The troubles that King James the First met with from them in Scotland were so many and great, that one would think them too hard for any Sovereign Prince to bear; were it not, that his Son King Charles the First felt from them much greater: And his Posterity have found the bitter fruits of their pretended Loyalty ever since. But of these things you may read more at large in Archbishops Spotswood's History of Scotland, Foulis History of the Presbyterians, the Earl of Clarendon's History of the late Troubles, with many others to whom I refer you.

But the Vindicators of Presbyterian Loyalty do it chiefly by way of Comparison, that is, by Charging others *with as many Plots, and as great Rebellions, as can be laid to their Charge*, which by the way is but an Aukward Argument for proving of their Loyalty, by making others as disloyal as themselves, for that is to prove or assert their own Innocence by bringing in others equally guilty of the same crime, which may help to enlarge the guilt, and extend it farther, but cannot lessen or wipe it out.

But because those Hints and Accusations are chiefly level'd against Church-men in the Case of the Revolution, and what hath happen'd since, 'twill be expedient if possible, to set that great and important Affair in its true light.

To which End, we may Note, That the Church of England hath been ever fam'd for Loyalty and Subjection to the Higher Powers; its Doctrine with that of our Saviour and his Apostles, give no Countenance to any Rising up or Rebelling against them, and its true Sons have often suffered for their adhering to it, but never allow'd any departing or Revolting from it; for the precept is ge-

neral and indefinite, *Let every Soul be subject to the higher Powers*, without any exception of Persons or Cases. And the prohibition of Resistance is Absolute; *whosoever therefore resisteth the Power resisteth an Ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation*, which St. Peter extends not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward; making it more thank worthy, to Suffer under a bad master, than to Obey a good. This is the duty and demeanor of good Subjects, as 'tis set forth in Scripture, toward Sovereign Princes.

But though Subjects have no power of judging, punishing or deposing of Princes; yet God Almighty who is *King of Kings and the only Ruler of Princes*, hath a paramount prerogative of putting down one, and setting up another as he in his infinite wisdom sees fit, And when he by his overruling hand of Providence hath interposed, and used this prerogative by Changing our Governours, there our Submission to them is not a Breaking off; but a Continuance of our Loyalty, for such a work or Counsel being of God, it cannot be Resisted without a fighting against him; as we read Acts 5. 39. Jeroboams Going off and carrying the ten Tribes of Israel with him from Rehoboam, is said to be of the Lord, who promis'd and accordingly gave him the Government of them, and therefore forbad all Opposing, and requir'd the owning and submitting to him, because it was from him; 1 Kings 11. 31. and Chap. 12. 15. 24. Suitable whereunto St Paul requires *Subjection to the Powers that are*, because *there is no Power but of God, the Powers that be are ordained of God, and to resist the Powers in being is to resist the Ordinance of God*. Rom. 13. 1, 2.

Moreover, Protection and Subjection being the Mutual and Relative Duties of the Prince and People, we stand obliged to pay our Subjection to those from whom we receive protection; otherwise we must unavoidably fall into a state of War and Confusion, and lose all the benefit and advantages of Government; to enjoy which, the Apostle makes it necessary to be subject to the present Powers, not only for wrath or fear of punishment, but for Conscience sake; verse 5. of that Chap.

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This if I mistake not, is the true Notion of the Church of England Loyalty in this great and difficult Case, wherein yet I humbly submit to better Judgments.

But the Presbyterian Loyalty is of a very different Nature and Kind, for that allows of and encourages the opposing and over-ruling the Authority of Sovereign Princes, of calling them to an Account for male Administration, of which themselves or the people are to be judges, and so may arraign, condemn, depose and execute Princes, as they shall think necessary, and thereby set the subordinate Powers above the supreme; which are principles of Sedition and Rebellion, that have a pernicious influence upon the publick peace and prosperity both of the Prince and People: and are therefore to be carefully watch'd against.

But the Presbyterians are unwilling that these principles should die with them, and therefore call loudly for *private Schools and Academies*, to breed up their Children in the same sentiments, and to propagate the poison to posterity. This they take to be a matter of so great Consequence to the Dissenting Cause, that the very Being and Continuance of it depend mightily upon it, for the Conventicle must in time drop and fall to the ground without some learning to uphold it, tho' some small smatterings of it with a great deal of boldness and confidence are sufficient for the great work of dividing and deluding the People. And this makes them so solicitous for some places of private Education of youth for that purpose.

Now to raise the Credit and Esteem of these little Academies; This Vindicator with other of his Brethren seeks to undervalue and detract from the honour of the Universities, he styles them indeed *Seminaries of Learning*, but omits the mention of *Sound Religion*, which is usually joyn'd with it, to intimate that little or none of that is to be found in them, and 'tis frequent among them, to call them the Nurseries of Vice, rather than the Seminaries of Virtue and Religion; but censuring and defaming is no new thing with them, with whom evil speaking is almost as Common as speaking.

Another of them labours to diminish the Reputation of their Learning too, making their Rival Schools equal, if not

not superiour to them therein, for he Asks the Question, *Whether Learning be so tender a plant, that it will not thrive out of the Soil or Air of Oxford and Cambridge?* But may not the good culture and great improvements of that Soil give great Advantages to Learning; and make it thrive and grow better there, than in other more barren and uncultivated places? is not the wisdom and learning of the whole Nation deriv'd from those fountains? this is well known and acknowledg'd too by all that have any share of it, and is denied by none but those that want it; 'tis a true saying, *scientia non habet inimicum præter ignorantem*, knowledge hath no enemy but ignorance, and learning is undervalued by none but such as do not know its worth, all others set a high price upon it, and honour the places from whence they receiv'd it.

But *is Philosophy* (saith he) *confin'd to Colledges; and so circumscribed in those enchanted Castles, as never to go abroad to take the air in other places, but only favours those, who visit her magical Palaces?* In Answer to this, 'tis more than probable, that this Author receiv'd his Education from one or other of our famous Universities, which he now labours to depreciate, and so turns the Artillery of his Arguments and Philosophy against those renowned seats of learning, that furnished him with both; which justly calls in Question the gratitude and ingenuity of such Dissenting writers, and shews them to dissent as much from good manners, as they do from good Orders. But he goes on and Asks, *Are Aristotle, Gassendus, and Descartes different Books out of the Universities, from what they are there?* No, but though the Books are the same, yet I hope he will think the Opportunities and Advantages of understanding them, to be much better and greater there than elsewhere: perhaps those Learned Books are little read, and less understood in private Schools, and certain it is, that the expounding of them to any purpose, requires men of greater Age and Abilities, than those places can afford, which are no where so well to be met with as in the Universities.

But *if the Scholars* (saith he) *in private Schools have a like Lectures, a like Industry, a like Exercises; what should hinder*

binders them from having a like Learning with those in the Universities? Now tho' industry with good parts may do much; yet I hope he will not compare the paltry Exercises and Performances of School-boys with the Learned Exercises and Lectures of the Universities; and that they may learn as much from one as the other. If he thinks fit to assert that, I shall not think fit to Reason any farther with One, who will venture to say any thing, to support a Cause, for which he thinks he must say something.

But yet after all, 'Tis not the Learning or Discipline of the Universities, that make these Men Enemies to them; but their Learning that there, which they would not have them, namely a firm Adherence to the Establish'd Orders of Church and State, which the Instructions of their private Schools, and Meetings labour hard to subvert; And 'tis no wonder if they are Enemies to those Persons and Places, that stand in their way, and hinder the success of their Beloved designs. I am, Sir,

Yours A. B.

Tenth Letter.

S I R,

THE other Pamphlet mentioned in my Last is Intituled *Plain dealing*; the plain design of the Author whereof, is by some trifling Objections against the Ceremonies and terms of Communion to justify the Separation, to draw from the Church, and encrease the number of his Followers; And with other of his Brethren to set up a Cry for Amendments, Abatements and Alterations in the terms of Communion, or to be admitted without them; all which upon a due Examination I fear will be found not so much plain as foul and false Dealing: as by considering a few of them will plainly appear.

The First Exception he hath against the Church, is in the very Entrance into it by Baptism, wherein he Condemns the Use of Godfathers and Godmothers, as an invention and imposition of Men, and not an Institution of God; And would

would have it therefore to be laid aside in the Administration of it.

Now though this Usage be as ancient as Christianity; yea tho' we find it used in the Jewish Church, wherein Infants had witnesses and undertakers at their Entrance into the Covenant by Circumcision, from whence it was deriv'd and continued in the Christian Church to this day, and is still practised in the Reformed Churches abroad; yet this Novelist would have it laid aside, because it is not mention'd in Holy Scripture, as if no Circumstance or Ceremony may be us'd about Holy things, but what is expressly mention'd there; and nothing is left to the Wisdom and Authority of Governours for Ordering the smallest matters, which would in many things condemn and contradict their own practice.

But tho' this Usage be not particularly mention'd, yet is it no where forbidden in Scripture, but is highly consonant to the general Rules of Order, Decency and Edification, mention'd there, and very agreeable to the nature, end and use of Baptism, viz. the benefit and good Education of Children, which may abundantly warrant the practice; and he may as well declaim against Pulpits, Fonts, and other decent usages of Baptism, because not commanded in Scripture. Beside, the use of Godfathers and Godmothers, is no sinful Addition to the Ordinance of Baptism; nor is it requir'd by the Church as any necessary or Essential part of it, for she Omits it in the Case of private Baptism, which yet she declares to be perfect, full, and sufficient without them. *But Parents (saith he) are forbidden by the Church to present or undertake for their own Children, in which they are chiefly concern'd.*

This is either a wilful, or an unwitting mistake, for Parents are not forbidden to do either: but the Church requires others to be join'd with them for the better security of Children in case of the death or negligence of Parents, which is so wise, wholesom, and pious an Institution, that instead of cavilling and complaining, all Parents ought to be highly thankful, that so great care is taken for the Welfare and Education of their Offspring.

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But, *the Church* (adds he) *Obliges Godfathers and Godmothers to promise that for Children, which no Man can perform for himself, which must be therefore an imposition, that no Man of thought or Conscience can allow.* In Answer to this, which is often said in this Case, we must know, that this Promise made by Sureties in the name of Baptized Infants, is not that they shall actually *Renounce all their Ghostly Enemies, and keep God's Holy Will and Commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life*; for this is more then any Man living can promise for himself or any other; but only to use their endeavours for that purpose, that *they may be virtuously brought up to lead a Godly and Christian life, which by the Grace of God concurring, they may and ought to do.* So that this Collateral security of Sureties added to the Natural Obligation of Parents, to take care of their Religious Education, may be a good means of Effecting it, and is not so much an Imposition, as a pious and excellent Institution, which Men of thought and Conscience may and will do their best to perform; whose Assistance therein may contribute much to the Actual fulfilling of what they have solemnly promis'd and engag'd for them.

Neither is the Abuse of this Institution, by the neglect of those who have undertaken this Office, (which is likewise Objected) a sufficient Argument for laying aside the use, but a strong reason to Amend and Correct this Abuse of it, by calling upon, and stirring up Sureties to a more careful minding of their Duty for the future.

Secondly, another fault he finds in the Office of Baptism, is *the signing Children with the sign of the Cross* in the Administring of it; which he looks upon as a Sacramental Sign, Similitude, or Image, forbidden in the second Commandment; and likewise much Abused by the Church of Rome, and tending to Idolatry and Superstition; and therefore necessary to be laid aside, or left at liberty to be used or not, as Men are satisfied about it in their own minds.

But is it fit, that so ancient a Rite or Usage of the Church, for we find it us'd by many of the Primitive Fathers in honour of our Saviour, and confirm'd too by the Authority of our own and other Churches; should be sa-

crific'd to the Levity of ignorant innovators, and left at every ones pleasure, whether he will Obey it or not? must not this prostitute the honour of Christ and his Church, together with the Dignity and Authority of Government, to be disobey'd in so small, and yet so memorable and useful a Ceremony? which is used meerly as a memorative sign, to put baptis'd Persons in Remembrance of Christ's dying and suffering on the Cross for their Redemption, and to mind them of their Duty in taking up the Cross at his Call, and to follow him by the Cross, to a Crown of endless Glory.

The Church does not make or intend it for a thing necessary or essential to Baptism, which she owns may be full and compleat without it: nor does she ascribe any thing of a Sacrament to it, not being enjoin'd by Christ as a means of Grace, nor having any promise of Grace annex to it, nor given as a seal or pledge to assure us thereof, which are the necessary ingredients of a Sacrament; much less hath it any thing of an image or similitude forbidden in the second Commandment; for that prohibits only such likenesses, as are made or worshiped in the room or stead of God, which none can be so weak, as to affirm of the Cross in Baptism.

In short, This sign is requir'd only as an honourable Badge of our Christian Profession, to signifie that we serve a Crucified Saviour, and that we are not ashamed of the Cross of Christ, to whose Service we have dedicated our selves, but rather Glory in it, as our great honour to be listed in the number of his followers, adoring not the sign it self, but only the Person represented by it; and is therefore no more to be blam'd or laid aside, for the Abuse of it by Papists or others, then we may lay aside the Holy Scriptures, because they are abused and perverted by Hereticks and Schismatics.

These are his frivolous exceptions about the Sacrament of Baptism: But he hath as weak as these in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and that is, *they cannot receive* (saith he) *the Sacred Elements, which is an Institution of God, unless they receive it Kneeling, which is an invention of Men*; And because this is so light a matter, he owns in
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the next words, *That 'tis not the posture, but the imposition of it upon tender Consciences, that they blame.* Now must it not be a strange sort of peevishness and perverseness, to dislike or refuse an innocent becoming thing, meerly because it is Commanded; and by that Authority too, which they are bound to obey in far greater matters? this is as if a Servant should say to his Master, who bids him kneel at his Prayers, that he hath indeed no exception against the Gesture, but he will not do it because he is bid. Who would not be moved with indignation against such a Servant, and make him feel the weight of his displeasure? And is not such an Affront much higher and provoking, when offer'd to our Saviour, or to those to whom he hath given Authority in his Church?

But *their tender Consciences* (saith he) *cannot bear such an Imposition.* Sure, that must be a very fore and tender Conscience indeed, that cannot bear the weight of so light and easy a Command, yea, it looks more like a feared or skittish Conscience, thus to *Strain at the Gnat* of an innocent Ceremony, and at the same time to *swallow the Camel* of Schism and disobedience.

He that hath any true Love to his Saviour will not neglect the Remembrance of him, upon the slight account of a gesture or Ceremony; much less will he refuse the tokens of his love, because he is to receive them kneeling. The Church hath taken all possible care and caution to remove all scruple or suspicion of worshipping the Elements by that posture, and declar'd it to be enjoin'd only as a Token of Humility and Reverence to our Maker in Receiving them; and therefore it must be a Token of great ignorance or irreverence, to neglect or refuse them in that humble gesture. We commonly kneel to Princes in delivering Petitions to them, and receiving favours from them; and shall we shew less Honour and Reverence in Addresses to Almighty God in the most solemn Acts of his Worship, then we are wont to do to Earthly Princes in far lesser matters? Let that be far from us.

But beside these slight and trivial exceptions against the Rites and Ceremonies us'd in the two Sacraments; This Plain Dealer hath many more of the same Nature, against

the Liturgy and unscriptural Forms of Prayers; against Reading for Lessons some parts of the Apochryphal Writings, against wearing the Surplice, and the like, all which have been answered a hundred times over, and very lately in a well-written Pamphlet, Intituled, *The Church of England Vindicated, and Separation from her Communion shew'd to be Causeless and Schismatical*, against Mr Owen's *Plain dealing*, to which I refer the Reader.

Now from these and such like frivolous Objections, his Dissenting Brethren set up a Cry for *Amendments and Alterations* in the publick Prayers of the Church, and the terms of its Communion.

Indeed *Amendment* is a plausible Term, and the calling for it signifies a seeming desire that all things in the worship of God should be ordered after the best manner; that his service should be perfect and worthy of him, by Amending what is amiss, and Adding what is defective in it. Moreover this carries with it a shew of great willingness to be satisfied, and a readiness to comply with publick Orders, if a few things were but a little Alter'd and Amended: hereby they would perswade the World, that they are only kept from Conformity by principles of Conscience; that there are some things that justly Offend, which if they were laid aside, they would no longer Dissent from, but gladly close in with the Church.

But what is the end or design of these plausible pretences? why! If we search into the Bottom of them, we shall find their end to be quite different from what is pretended, and that their Aim is not so much for the Amendment, as the Abolition of the Liturgy; to effect which, they first cast reflections upon it both as to the matter and manner of its composure, finding such faults in both, as to stand in need of being mended, and by that means to put the Church upon continual Altering, Reforming, and Adding to it, till they Reform it all away.

This hath been once done already, viz. in the days of the great Rebellion, when the Cry of Reformation was so loud and frequent that all things that were ancient and orthodox, were laid aside as Antiquated and Carnal Ordinances, and all new and upstart things receiv'd as more Spritual

Spiritual and better means of Edification. Those Blessed Reformers mended matters in the State, by changing Monarchy into Anarchy and a Common-wealth; and by Murdering a good King set up an Army of Tyrants; they Reform'd the Church by changing Episcopacy for Presbytery and Independency; A Liturgy for a Directory; and Order for Confusion, and compleated their Reformation by Sects and Sacrilege. All which brought that misery and trouble upon the Land, that the People weary of those Changes, willingly return'd again to the old Constitution in Church and State.

But after the happy Restoration, wherein all things were settled upon the ancient foundations, there arose some of the same principles and designs with the former, who renew'd the Cry for Amendments and Alterations in the Liturgy. To gratify whom, King Charles the second Appointed a Meeting of some Divines of the Church of England, and some of the Brethren of the Separation at the Savoy, to consult and confer together about that matter, in order to unite his Subjects in one Fellowship and Communion; where though some Alterations and Additions were made, yet that would not content them, but they were still calling for more; and not only so, but formed a new Liturgy of their own, which they styled the Reformed Liturgy, moving for the establishing of it in the room of the other, or else a Liberty of using one or the other at Discretion: and tho' the King desired, as well as requir'd them to read those parts of the Common Prayer against which they had no exception, for the sake of peace and to prevent divisions; yet nothing would satisfy them, but either the laying aside the old, or setting up their new-fangled model by its side, which made his Majesty injoin the use of the Liturgy with greater strictness, and turned the deaf ear ever after to such obstinate Innovators.

All which make it evident, that the main Drift of these Men, is to have the best compos'd Liturgy or forms of Prayer to be removed, to make way for their Novelties and extempore effusions; yea they have a farther fetch in it, to wit, to make the Church by continual Alterations the instrument of its own Ruin, and to pull down the best
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Constitution in the World by its own hands. This puts these Restless enemies upon watching all junctures, and laying hold of all opportunities of working their ends upon it, and by catching at some favourable concessions of Church men to render them Accessary to their own destruction. To prevent which, we should be as wary of Innovation, as they are watchful for Alterations; and not too easily yield to either.

The Church indeed hath wisely declar'd as well against too much stiffness in Refusing, as too much easiness in granting Alterations, the better to avoid the Evils of both. and therefore though she sometimes hath, yet never without urgent Reason admitted any change to be made in its publick Service, well knowing the mischief of Altering well-advis'd Establishments; where the inconveniencies of Change are commonly more and greater, then those it pretends to Remedy. The Prophet Jeremy bids us to *stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your Souls*: though there were some perverse People in his as well as in our days, *who said, we will not walk therein*, Jer. 6. 16. such as these instead of finding Rest to their Souls, give no Rest to themselves or others, but create much trouble to both: he that leaves the beaten track may soon fall or find himself in the Briers, and who knows the evils and dangers into which Innovations lead? 'Twas therefore a well advised Canon in the Council of Nice, *Τὰ ἀρχαία ἐν κρητεῖται, Let ancient Customs be kept to*, which having pass'd the Test of many Ages, are more safe then untry'd Novelties. It must needs be no small Reflection on the publick Prayers to be always mending them; and if such deliberate and well-weigh'd Compositures require so much Amendment, how imperfect (think you) must sudden and hasty Conceptions be? yea, it cannot but be a great prejudice, as well as scandal to Religion it self, to stand in continual need of Reforming, which occasion'd that sharp Sarcastm of the Poet,

*As if Religion were intended
For nothing else but to be mended.*

Whereas

Whereas if we would take more care to mend our selves, we should see little Reason to mend our Prayers. Stable and well-settled Christians are fix'd in the belief of ancient truths, and firmly adhere to the forms of sound words. They are only weak and wavering minds that reject the old, and affect too much new things, and so *like children are toss'd to and fro and carried about with every wind of Doctrine*. It only gratifies the desultorious Levity and inconstancy of Men given to Change, to be entertain'd with varieties of Alteration, this claws their itch of Novelty which is the scab of the Church, and infests it with many sore and pestilent Evils; for Men addicted to change cannot tell where to stop, what is mended to day may put them upon calling for more to morrow; who shall set bounds and limits to this Reforming humour? and is it not better to stop while we are well, then to go on and endanger by change to make matters worse? Experience shews us, that Amendments never satisfy, and Alterations commonly end in the Destruction of the whole.

Beside all which, this humour of Change destroys the Harmony of Confessions in the Churches, by leading from Ancient and well-advised models, to upstart and new fangled Inventions, which breaks the peace and unity of the Catholick Church, and leads to all manner of Schisms and Confusions. I have said the more of this, to convince Men if possible of the danger of Innovations, and also of the wisdom and safety of that Advice of Solomon; *My Son, fear God and the King, and meddle not with them, that are given to change*.

I shall shut up all with a word of Advice to our Dissenting Brethren, and that is, to lay aside their prejudices against Forms of Prayer, and innocent Ceremonies, confess'd on all sides to be in their nature indifferent; which are enjoin'd and us'd in all National Churches in the World. Our Church hath but few of them, and such as are no hindrance but furtherance of true Devotion. The Lutheran and Forreign Churches have many more, and they who refuse Communion with us upon that account, cannot safely Communicate with any other Christian Church; for which reason they are not only justly blam'd at home, but
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generally condemn'd by all the Protestant Reformed Churches abroad, which one would think should prevail with them, no longer to continue those Divisions, which give so great an Occasion to the Enemies of Christianity to blaspheme. The Atheists, Deists, and Libertines of the Age, make use of them to deride and scoff at all Religion, which they see is become little better than a Bone of Contention, fit only to be cast away. The Papists likewise make their advantage of them, and have still some hopes of coming in by the Breaches made by them. Wherefore my Brethren, be perswaded at last to heal and close up these Breaches by joining in the Communion with the sound Members of the Establish'd Church, which will best qualify and prepare you for the Communion with the Saints in Heaven.

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